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By the City of the Long Sand
A Tale of New China



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TORONTO

*By the City
of the Long Sand*

A Tale of New China

By
Alice Tisdale Hobart



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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN FOR WOMEN

AND

DEDICATED TO MEN

Especially the four men who have made my life—my father, who valiantly assumed the duties of both mother and father in my behalf; my brother, who was my boon companion through all my childhood and girlhood; my husband, whose love and companionship have been the incentive for all this homesteading; and my friend, the physician who gave me back my life, and who gave so generously of himself to patients like me that he paid with his own life.

To these four:

EDWIN HENRY NOURSE

EDWIN GRISWOLD NOURSE

EARLE TISDALE HOBART

ANDREW M. MASSIE

with love and gratitude, I dedicate this book.

NOTE

PERHAPS it is unnecessary to explain that although the facts in this book are true they have been built, in many cases, around imaginary people. Often the incidents, also true in themselves, have been transposed from the place of their happening. This has been done that nothing in the book may seem personal to my friends of the East—English, American, and Chinese—with whom I have dwelt very happily for many years.

Sketches by

Lieutenant Commander Henry Kieffer

Photographs by

Mr. Asmus, Mr. Leitao,

Miss Nourse, and Mr. Hobart

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Prologue: A Legend

PROLOGUE. A LEGEND

I AM certain that this little legend was once written in an old wood-backed book by some ancient sage, and that it is even now carefully treasured among the sacred records in some yellow, curved-roofed temple on some high inaccessible mountain. Only because it is so carefully preserved have I not been able to find the original of it.

After the great Lord had made the earth (the Chinese tale of creation runs a little differently from ours of the book of Genesis) he decided to give to the earth color. It was while he was resting after he had created the world that he thought to give it this gift. As he looked down upon his creation lying far below him, gray and devoid of any color, he saw that, lying thus, it offered no beauty. Then again creation possessed him and he took a giant brush and splashed it into a giant pot of heavenly green. It was in this first moment of abandonment that he painted China, his chosen country.

Down on what is now its southern border he began painting in long sweeps of green. Great strips of the cool, clear evergreen of the bamboo he made. Then followed the deep, dark green of the mulberry and the thick evergreen of tea shrubs. Beneath them he put in the sharp, vivid green of the rice. Then he

made to fall over these green, green stretches of southern China slanting, gossamer mists of rain, a soft, perpetual rain which should last through thousands of years. As day followed day through centuries this rain gave to the air some curious quality and the falling mists refracted and multiplied the greens into a thousand different hues until it seemed sometimes as if the gray-blue sky above took on pale tints of soft, elusive green which tinged the clouds themselves. He saw now that his handiwork was indeed good, but before he rested he stationed a quiet, dreaming man in the midst of this paradise tuned to the ecstasy of his creator. In those far-off days when man and God walked hand in hand this man fell to worshipping the magic beauty of the green earth. Then the gift of creation descended upon him and he built long, still canals, which made fairy lines through the master's greens, mirroring the green of bamboo and mulberry and rice and the faint, faint green which at times he believed he saw in the sky and the clouds. Then the great Lord saw that the gift of color to the earth was indeed good. Thus was southern China made.

But so much green had been used, says the legend hidden in the wood-backed book in the yellow-roofed temple, that all the green of heaven had been exhausted. Sadly for a moment that to us would have seemed an age the great Lord pondered. Unless he could give color to the rest of his world he might

better have left it under the sea. Thus did he grieve. Then again the ecstasy of the creator broke upon him, and he commanded the angels to bring forth a giant pot of brown and a great, clean brush. With one stroke he swept the clouds out of the sky; he did away with the gossamer mists of rain. He took a jagged bit of lightning and scratched the earth's surface with it, making a river. Beyond the valley of this twisting, branching river he commanded the rain that it should not go. Then out of the gold of heaven he made sunshine and sifted through the air bits of powdered gold dust. Then it was that he dipped his brush into the pot of desert brown and finished this chosen country of China in staggering masses of brown. He made red-brown earth, he tinged the rivers with the same red-brown, and for food he gave to man the red-brown heads of the kaoliang tossing in the windy air, for it was here in the north that he made wind, bringing it from the very caverns of hell.

That was how the great Lord made northern China in the beginning, eons ago, and in this present machine-driven age you can behold it almost as it was made in those far-off, dim beginnings. The brown Yangtse was the river that he drew with chain lightning, and beyond its valley, now as then, for nine, ten months, even for a year, no rain falls. To the north stretching away from the green valley of the Yangtse into a hazy gold distance are the brown, brown plains with

century-old, long, brown roads passing over them. They are long, brown, parallel ruts like indented railway ties zig-zagging to a brown horizon. Along them crawl the brown, varnished, two-wheeled carts of the oldest model known to man. Dusty brown camels go goose-stepping away into a shining, brown vastness. Brown, mound-like huts house the living, smaller brown huts house the dead. Except for a wavering moment in the spring, year in and year out, one is still confronted with those tremendous, primeval masses of brown.

This is China with its two halves, one green, one brown. You of America who have become a little god-like in your ability to subjugate nature and make the earth take on the coloring you desire may perhaps now understand a little better China's unrelieved coloring. This is the beauty adorning my tale. For whatever I may say of filth or poverty in China there is this almost staggering beauty of her countryside.

And this is the moral of my legend. Although the white man may wander over this sleeping, dreaming China, bringing to it his religion or his country's products for trade, within it he never entirely finds rest, for no white man has ever lived in the northern half of China who has not felt his very being stamped with the excessive brown pigments of its plains and the intense yellow of its sunlight. They act like wine-of-gods in his veins, endowing him with a mythi-

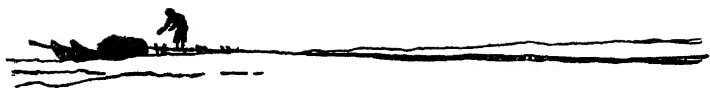
cal energy that in time leaves him exhausted, "played out." And no white man has lived south of the Yangtse who has not at some time felt his blood turn to water in the soft, still atmosphere filled with the unrelenting, fine rain. It is as if his very energies were being sucked up by the earth to help create the green, green glory of southern China. There is something about this climate of China, which produces such excessive pigments of coloring, some other-world quality to which his white blood will not adapt itself. It is as if the great Lord who created it for another kind of man said, "It is not your land and to keep you from coveting it, it shall always thwart you a little." So in the very beginning you must remember our homesteading has a quality of exile about it.

■

Part I

Our Alien Surroundings

By the Waters of Babylon We Sat Down



BY THE CITY OF THE LONG SAND

A Tale of New China

CHAPTER I

A WINDOW WHICH GAVE ON THE CITY OF THE LONG SAND

ON a March morning in the year nineteen twenty-two I stood at the window upstairs in the wing of my new home—mine since the evening before. I was about to start upon my seven times seventh bit of homesteading as the wife of a representative of a great American oil company in China. This time our stakes were set on an island across from the “City of the Long Sand.”

Far below me at the foot of my garden embankment lay that long sand. Coated with hoar-frost it stretched a mile south to the upper point of the island; coated with hoar-frost it stretched a mile north to the lower point of the island. In great sculptured waves, it reached from end to end of the opposite side of this thin, long island. From the west rooms of my house I could see those still and tawny waves with their crests of white. Here on the front of the island, from this east window, a thousand-foot

breadth of sand confronted me. For five months, they told me, it had lain like a beach to which the tide has forgotten to come. Thus it awaited the spring rise of this Yangtse tributary, now but a meagre stream in the distance.

The receding figure of my husband grew smaller and smaller down the thin ash path which flung itself like a black whip-thong across the barren sand. He reached the river and trod carefully the planks raised upon trestles over the water's first shallow reaches. His dark form took on a moment's distinctness silhouetted against the river's steely line. Then he all but disappeared as he stepped down into a sampan. His boat was pushed off into a jungle of junks and I had lost him. But my straining gaze was rewarded with a final glimpse as he boarded the company launch, which turned and moved down river toward his office in the city on the mainland.

Reluctantly, as always on the first morning in each new bit of homesteading, I relinquished my husband's sustaining presence. To do so intensified my sense of isolation, my feeling of swinging between two worlds—America, my country by birth, but from which I was separated for three and a half out of every four years; China, my country by residence, but from which racially I was forever set apart. This was the empty moment after my husband's departure and before I was yet absorbed in the business of homemaking. That would begin as soon as my hus-

band "took over" the oil business of this interior province of China.

I looked long at that City of the Long Sand, Changsha, a jumble of roofs across the river, a city steeped in rebellion, capital city of the province of Hunan; Hunan the independent province in the very heart of vast China, a Mason and Dixon's line between two contending republics. One lay to the north of us, with its headquarters and kaleidoscopic presidencies in Peking, where also a discarded emperor still found shelter in the seclusion of the Forbidden City. One lay to the south of us, with its headquarters in Canton, fire-eating Sun Yat Sen its self-appointed leader. Changsha, sprawling over there on top of its own high river wall, looked under the smoke of its morning house-fires like a smouldering volcano, which indeed it was, as it refused allegiance to either republic. From now on this volcanic city was to be my home town.

My moment of detachment was over. Clearly I foresaw that never for this three-year sojourn should I be entirely unaware of this city which considered all men not Hunanese as foreigners and which repudiated the authority of all Chinese of other provinces. For them she felt but little less contempt than she felt for us, the outside barbarians from the West. Hunan then was the state of my adoption, a province where democracy, war, and bandits struggled together. Changsha then was to be my home town, the

city at the headwater of all Hunan's streams of strife.

What lay ahead of us? On a map of defense we had seen last evening this house of ours was marked with a star to signify that it was to be the fort for Americans in case of trouble. Indeed it had already been thus used. The marks of bullets were on its outer walls. Our little colony of white men, shut into an island far in the interior of China in the province of Hunan, the hot-bed of most of the revolutions in China, knew it was well always to be prepared. No one, not even the Hunanese, could predict what a year would bring forth; whether it would be the odd year of peace or whether it would be a year of national upheaval when the north and the south would fight each other along this Mason and Dixon line or whether the province of Hunan would stage a little revolution all its own. If there were no outsiders to fight, the Hunanese could always fight themselves. Hunan found the bread of life scarcely worth eating without the salt of strife. It was with such men that my husband was going to do business for the great American oil company.

And I, his wife? For three years I was to live here in this "company house" on this island where each winter I should be bound about by the Long Sand and each summer shut away into the island's green fastnesses by the high waters of the Yangtse tributary which would then besiege the gates of our garden wall.

At last I looked away from this city of so much strife and uncertainty. The watch at my wrist said nine o'clock. New York clocks were twelve hours slower—or was it faster?—and at this very moment the city would be bursting into a blaze of light, tonight's—or was it yesterday's?—night life of New York. That up-town. Down-town lights would be going out as the working city closed its desks and shops to go home. There, falling into gloom, stood the home office building of our company. Twenty stories high it rose sheer from the pavement, an odd-shaped building with one rounded side. Across from it was a little square, and the street beside it was bright with electric globes and the swift-moving lights of automobiles.

On two home-leaves I had looked upon the reality of this building, and a hundred hundred times I had looked upon its picture hung in big offices and little offices of our company, in big ports and little ports, in the saloons of big ocean-going company tankers and in little river oil boats, till every line of it had grown familiar. There it stood, the American castle of a twentieth century empire, an empire of business, an empire of oil. Here in an Eastern city, my husband in his office and I in this company house, carried on for it.

To conjure up this building amidst my alien surroundings was an old trick of mine, often indulged in during my ten years' life in China. For some reason

perhaps not easily understood by stay-at-home Americans, I get comfort, even strength, in unmoored moments like this morning, in calling up the vision of that tall building with the rounded side. There is a whimsical pleasure in thinking of myself as a part of the twentieth century fairy tale of turning night into day, of furnishing oil for the lamps of China and her sister countries of the East. Too, it puts my personal life into a circle of life. It takes out of it the sense of isolation with which I started the day. For am I not of some small importance, as one of a long line of men and women, Americans "non-resident," following the old trade routes to the other side of the Pacific to extend the commercial frontiers of America?

Always beneath my fascination in the curious, picturesque existence which my countrymen suppose to be the whole story of foreign residence, I have found a deeper satisfaction in the consciousness that we still fit into the fundamental pattern of American life. We too set up American homes and build tiny American Main Streets. But best of all I find rootage for this uprooted foreign life of mine in the belief that we are making a real contribution to the trade life of our country. Are we not the last link in a chain of China trade happenings which have played their part in shaping the United States?

Columbus was dreaming of a new and shorter trade route to the East when he stumbled upon

America. Intrepid explorers by both land and sea opened up the heart of the continent and discovered the Pacific as a mere accident in the search for a shorter passage to Cathay. Then came the clipper ships! No Daughter of the Revolution could feel more pride in her ancestors than I do in my commercial forbears, the young and daring captains of those first sailing vessels of ours, who determined to break their way into the Asia trade which had lain so long in the hollow of Great Britain's hand and under the heel of Holland. Out of that trade grew some of our first great fortunes, fortunes which later helped to build railroads and develop our own domestic wealth. Hence, as the helpmeet of an American business man pioneering on the trade frontier in China, I could hold up my head in pride and take my place in the procession with the women of the Mayflower and the Covered Wagon.

How much of toil and struggle and hardship have preceded this day's homesteading of mine! That city across the way would have murdered my forefathers if they had so much as set foot in it. It was only twenty-odd years since the white man ventured to take up his abode in this City of the Long Sand. Not fifteen years ago he was driven forth by an anti-foreign mob. The hulk of a defunct sailing vessel, but recently discarded as the home of a white shipping company, rides now at the end of its anchor chains in the river below me, an eloquent relic of

those days of precarious residence. Its former occupants were safely established only two weeks ago in a house of their own on the island.

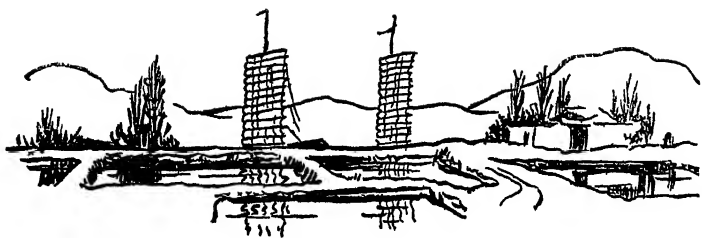
But even so, the pioneering is not finished; the danger and uncertainty that make a frontier still surround us. Antipathy between East and West persists. Many Chinese cities yet refuse the business man from Europe or America a place to live; in many more he is crowded into the least desirable section. Still we must accept danger and hardship if we are to play our part in the dream of our forefathers—a dream coming true as our great ships of the Oriental trade now sail from China full of tea, wood-oil, and silk, bound for half the nations of the globe, and return laden with machinery, wheat flour, tinned fruits—and oil to light a thousand coolie lamps or run the motor cars which bump their way across the Mongolian desert to Urga.

This is what I am a part of, and the fact brings me an indisputable sense of usefulness. Those brave sea captains, my economic ancestors, were not enough. They were the hunters; we are the homesteaders. A nation's frontiers, whether of land or trade, have but the transient quality of wanderers' night camps until women come and make homes for their men.

And so, as I stood there looking at the City of the Long Sand and the island homes of white men shut in to themselves by the Long Sand, I felt impelled to put down some kind of record of my years

of homesteading in the interest of American trade. Not because it was a record of my own life. But I felt that the story was significant today when the United States, outgrowing its internal frontiers, is looking forth across the world to far-off frontiers of trade. Here perhaps lies our last opportunity to test the pioneer fibre of American men and women.

To be sure, the terms of this test are different now. The old frontiersman was an individualist and his own master. The foreign trade pioneering of today can be done only under the auspices of the mighty business corporation, which demands of us that we blend with the fearlessness of the old pioneer the subtle and exacting discipline of a new pioneering. In the eight years of my married life I have felt myself being shaped by this great corporation influence. Compliance with its policies, acceptance of its *esprit de corps*, learning its lesson of emphasis on the whole and not on the individual, all these have molded me. In it all I see a challenge to the modern American man and, not less, to the modern American woman. From the stuff of the old frontiersman must grow the new frontiersman—a commercial citizen of the world.



CHAPTER II

AND THE CITIES ARE THE CHAIRS

IT was my second morning on the island across from the City of the Long Sand. As on the first morning, I had watched my husband's small receding figure walk the thin ash path which flung itself like a whip-thong across the Long Sand, seen him reach the river, tread carefully the planks raised on trestles, all but disappear into the sampan, lost him in a jungle of junks and caught a final glimpse of him as he boarded the company launch. Realizing suddenly that for all this cycle of homesteading, for a thousand and one days, I should stand at this window each morning and watch my husband start for his office, I felt the stretch of sand, the improvised jetty, the city across the way, the island, all weaving themselves into the very fibre of my being as had the things of my other cycles of homesteading.

I stood there thinking of those other cycles, those which were finished, and of this one that 'was about to begin. In a pattern they formed themselves before

me—cities of China, cities I had lived in, cities I had traveled through, cities which by trade treaty I might only pass through, cities which by trade treaty I might live in, cities with white men's houses, cities with none. Until eight years ago, I had known only the strident, pulsing city of Chicago and the little suburban towns strung along to the west of it. Until then the stretches of Illinois prairie had been my only portion of beauty. Now I rarely thought of them—my past or my future could not be divorced from the cities of China. I who, as a child, had been taught by my New England father to view with suspicion all families who did not have a permanent roof-tree under which they abode for all the days of their lives, found the memories of my married life coming with a hop, skip, and a jump from out of half the cities of China. The very texture of my mind had become the cities of China. I could only think in terms of them. Furthermore, as they rose up before me, they arranged themselves after the pattern of my childhood's game of "Going to Jerusalem" or "Musical Chairs" as some call it.

Some cities stand in the row as great big gilded chairs and some as little grimy chairs and some always have their backs turned towards me, whichever side of them I go. I and my husband and the other company people are the pilgrims winding round and round the cities of China to the music of trade, to the music of our skyscraper, that tall building in

Lower New York. Desires, commands of the skyscraper—these are the breaks in the music, the exciting moments in our commercial pilgrimage. In answer to these we find ourselves stopped before a gorgeous or a grimy city there to stay six months, a year, two—at the most three. Then again the skyscraper sets us moving, excitedly watching for the next stop.

Now don't immediately condemn the corporation if it does not make the music stop at the right city. It's no good to become aggravated because you are a cog. One has to remember there would be no foreign commerce for America, no commercial pilgrimages, if it were not for the corporations. When it comes to trade, individuals cannot cope with the East. We must have a big and powerful organization standing behind us to weather the meagre days of no sales when famine falls upon the land and there is no money for western luxuries, or when anti-foreign feeling breaks out and there is a boycott of all things from the West or when—well, there are a hundred different whens which it might tire you to have me tell you about.

So my record of homesteading in the interests of trade is bound up with the cities of China, yellow, imperial cities; gay, commercial cities; brown, frontier cities, black, and white interior cities. We from the Main Street country pass through the great, high portals of their gates to bring them the lamp from America. There in company houses we, the wives, live, stand in windows like this one, look out over



*OUR men travel in primitive fashion by donkey
or cart in the North, by junk in the South.*

ribbons of sand or huddled Chinese roofs or green rice paddies, happy or miserable according to our flair for pioneering. Using these as starting points our men travel to the earth-brown villages nestled to the brown earth of northern China, and to the primitive, windowless, whitewashed, smoke-begrimed villages set in the green depths of southern China. Over and over they must visit them, inspect, exhort the Chinese petty merchant, show him the driving force, the integrity of American business.

This then is the refrain to which I march through life; cities we live in, cities we travel through, cities we covet, cities we fear, cities with trade treaties, cities with none. Out of it I now make my own song of the skyscraper, rehearse my own part in this commercial game of "Going to Jerusalem."

Cities of China!

Shanghai, Peking, Tientsin, Newchwang, stop!

Shanghai, Darien, Moukden, Antung, stop!

Two cities of northern China fallen to my lot.

Shanghai, Hangchow, stop!

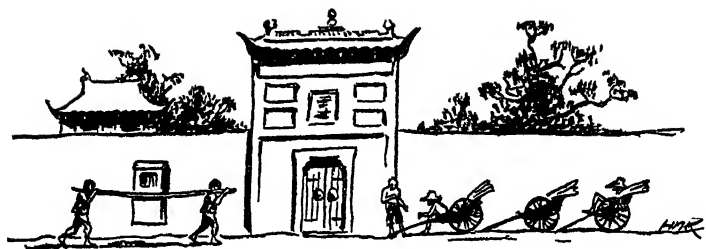
One city of southern China fallen to my lot.

Shanghai, Kiukiang, Hankow, Changsha, stop!

One city in the great Yangtse basin fallen to my lot.

It was but two days ago this last cycle began.

Cycles of homesteading, those that are finished, this one that is about to begin, you stamp yourselves on my heart.



CHAPTER III

THE MIRACLE OF NATIONALITY

BECAUSE I am an American homesteader, I have the power to look within each gray and white city in the green half of China and each brown city of the brown half of China and see the bit of America which trade has hidden in its heart. What is it? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name. . . ."

Thus does the man of trade from England have the vision which sees and creates England, and Frenchmen make visible a bit of France. It matters not that the red and gold signs, the tiled and thatched roofs, the fantastic pagodas, the narrow, walled-in dirty streets of the East often entirely obscure these mosaics of Main Street built in the image of America, England, France, Germany. This is the miracle of nationality.

Come inland, penetrate with me into almost any one of these dim thousand-year-old cities, so deep that the very products which the man from the West

has introduced—oil lamps, leather shoes, and even soap—have lost forever their rightful western look and in some insidious way become Oriental in aspect, and I will show you this miracle of nationality. Into the interior we go until China picturesque and sordid, China effete and primitive wraps us about, will not let us go, and there I will show you America. America! In seven years this experience has never ceased to thrill me.

Suppose we choose a city in the Yangtse valley, just any city. Come, sitting in sedan chairs upon the shoulders of men, we ride into the city. The East surges around us in great, battering waves of humanity, presses upon us, breaks over us with the all but intolerable, naked meaning of life. From the windowless huts which border the tunnel-like streets China's millions belch forth—spawn produced by animals careless and wasteful of the individual. Through mean furtive streets, after mean furtive streets we ride. The cavish buildings draw closer, shut out the air, the sky, spill forth the encumbrances, the filth of too much living. Upon your sensibilities there impinges with ugly insistence the business of being born, getting food into bellies, dying. On your ear-drums beat the guttural sounds of men eating with the ravenous haste of animals, the squeals of pigs, the growls of wolfish dogs, the grunts of pack animals in the thin disguise of men. Your nostrils contract against the reek of rancid oil being thrown

into hot and unclean pans, mingling with the smell of raw animal flesh overlaid with the odors of rotting garbage and the thick odor of joss burning to gilded gods who hear not the cry of the millions. To your ears comes the wail of unnumbered infants not yet tamed to pain, to your nostrils the reek of sewage and decaying fish. Deeper! Deeper! into the tunneled streets where there is no time for pity or cleanliness or beauty in this city where the unborn generations hurry upon the heels of today's millions. The ordered ways of the West are blotted from your mind. Only the ruthless sights, sounds, smells of the overstocked East remain. Dulled, beaten, stunned, you sit there on the shoulders of men who sweat, shout, swear their way deeper into the seething streets.

A louder shout. A gate opens in a high wall. Lo! your chair is set down in America! The Main Street that has been made a satire and a reproach looks like heaven to you. Spacious green lawns, such as you have always looked out upon in Illinois or Rhode Island, lie all around you. You look only into the deep recesses of quiet verandas. With what relief you behold the doors of the houses guarding with common reticence the intimate functions of existence.

What matters it that as we sit at luncheon, albeit it is now called "tiffin," surrounded by the amenities of a western meal—white table linen to look upon, the bland tinkle of glass and silver in our ears, dainty food to eat without haste—there beats through the

dining-room the harsh cries of Oriental beggars, the wail of funeral drums, the throb of temple gongs? *Mascee*. So, too, to the yellow man in Pell Street, New York or Chinatown, San Francisco, there comes the clang of trolleys, the honk of motors as he sits over his chopsticks and bowl of rice. This is the miracle of nationality. He sits in China though in America. We sit in America though in China. It matters not that the shadow of a Buddhist temple falls across my green western lawn and my tennis court. So too, may the shadow of a church fall across the Chinese threshold in America. It is only a shadow. It does not matter. These hidden towns of five or twenty-five or a hundred Americans belong to America as much as the villages of Iowa or Massachusetts. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name. . . ."

You may smile over these Cinderella Main Streets, our little western towns thrown helter-skelter among the markets and temples of Asia, but be merciful to them. As I draw away the veil from these hidden bits of America remember that like Tinker Bell they will not have the vitality to live unless you believe in them.



CHAPTER IV

THOSE HIDDEN TOWNS OF OURS AND YOURS

YOU can picture them best by taking the town you live in out of its setting of Vermont hills or western prairies, and putting it against the grime and the splendor and the sordidness of this medieval East of which I have just told you. Better picture a river or a bit of the ocean in front of it, for nine out of every ten of our towns are on a water front. Reduce the number of houses in your town to a dozen and build a high stone wall or strong bamboo fence around each one or each two or three. Subtract from your town the churches and the schools. We in the interior have only one public building on our Main Streets, "the club." Take away from your town the stores. These towns of ours are not big enough to support a grocery store or a meat market let alone a dry-goods store. We depend on the Chinese markets and Montgomery Ward.

Now take from your town most of the things you consider necessities and put in their places the things you have always thought of as luxuries. Make all the prosaic things of an American town as thrilling

and all the thrilling things as prosaic. That is what our towns are like.

As to this somersault of luxuries and necessities we have servants, any number of them. In fact, they far outnumber ourselves, but on the other hand, plumbing and steam heat are luxuries, yea even curiosities. We can buy ourselves curios such as only the rich aspire to at home, but often we cannot secure a spool of thread. All of us can afford to buy beautiful handmade silks and satins, but in these ten years I have never lived nearer than a day's journey to a package of hairpins.

As for thrilling things—what would your children do if they saw a line of camels with packs of tea and silk upon their backs come goose-stepping through their village? That is nothing to our children. But to see a street car or a motor, that would be an adventure. In fact just the chance to run unattended on the street would be thrill enough. Alone, they may only peep through the half-open gates of our gardens with the gateman standing only a few paces away. Sometimes they manage a little expedition on their own, but they never get farther than a step or so before the blue-coated arm of their policeman, the amah, reaches out to snatch them back. Angry with the pain of running on her bound feet, she admonishes them. "What thing? You no b'long coolie baby. Missie too much fear you go street side. She scoldie me. She spankie you." Thus does the adventure end.

Indeed they must always go guarded by their watchful amahs, for revolutions, the approach of bandits up to the city gates, and men beheaded in gala fashion on our water fronts are not unknown to us. But after all, these are the superficial differences of our towns and yours. There are others more fundamental.

You must now subtract from your town all youth, all young girls going to their first parties with their first lovers, all boys with changing voices and undecided futures. Our children must be sent home to America to be educated or they will grow up to be men without a country. To love books they say you must roll in a library and fall asleep on a pillow of books when you are small. To love your country you must have it succor you in your youth. Also our children must have that chance at freedom which we cannot give them here.

Next, subtract from your town all elderly men and women. We never hear the words grandfather and grandmother on our Main Streets. We are, after all, exiles in a strange land and an exile always wants to go home to die. Then too it is only while the spirit of youth and daring lies warm within us that we can cope with the East.

Yes, youth or age walking along our streets, crossing our thresholds, is indeed a thrilling experience. In my ten years of foreign residence, I can count all these experiences on the fingers of one hand. Now you can see how great a task is the homesteaders' in

creating in our towns the atmosphere of America. It is for us, the helpmeets of our men, to make bricks without straw, to give to these towns the buoyancy and zest of the youth whom we have had to send from us and the harbored sense of peace of the aged who never abide with us.

And I must own that there is a fly-by-night atmosphere in our towns, such as no respectable Main Street in American would tolerate. We have no stable, permanent citizens who give them character like the president of the bank or the oldest citizen who founded the town, and from whom the town takes its name. Not ~~we~~! You could not expect it in this undignified game of "Going to Jerusalem." There are no permanent rooftrees for us, the frontiersmen, in America's eastern trade. Our towns are in a continual state of flux. This week the American Consul is transferred, next week the Commissioner of Customs goes on his home leave, and so on. Two years in a place and we are very apt to be the oldest inhabitants. Sometimes in a spring or an autumn (our best migrating seasons) every house in one of our little towns will change hands. So, one six months a town may be very sober-minded, indeed, full of footsore wanderers who have lost zest for the game, and then in the next six months it may turn itself inside out and become an outrageously gay little place with a bride and groom in every house, for although our streets know not the plightings of

lovers they are well acquainted with the excited, first nestings of brides and grooms.

It comes about in this way. All men begin their life in these communities under a vow. Did ever one of our sister towns in America have such a thing—a group of business celibates? They are the novices in foreign business. Practically every firm, whether British or American or French, which operates in the interior, sends out its men single and insists they shall remain so for varying lengths of time. Perhaps because of the impatience of the American temperament ours is the shortest novitiate—two years. Long! did I hear you say? Why there is a British banking firm that has a ten-year novitiate.

Why have this novitiate at all? It is a difficult thing to explain to you in America where business and home are as separate as church and state. As a matter of fact no one has ever explained it to me. It is just a regulation. But in our own company I believe the reason would run something like this.

All men when they come out, come, they think, with the spirit of adventure which they believe is compounded of a dash of daring and good fighting instincts. Most of them have overlooked the fact that perhaps the greatest ingredient of adventure is a kind of bulldog tenacity which goes very often under the humble name of faithfulness. The company is quite willing to trust to the man's estimate of



*YOU can picture our little American towns
of trade in the midst of scenes like this.*

his own daring and bravery. But they insist on testing him for that ignominious quality of faithfulness or bulldog determination or company loyalty or whatever you want to call it.

Will he sit in the front room of the agent's shop—three weeks' journey from the home office—while he sees his own long anticipated holiday in the port city relentlessly slip away from him? Will he sit there as dogged as the agent who persistently and suavely swears that the company's shipments have failed to arrive? Will his mind be bent upon discovering the subterranean channels by which the company is morally certain their products are trickling profitably out into retail sales or will he be dreaming of the social delights of the next dance at the race club? Will he stick until he calls the ancient bluff by which the wily agent thus seeks to make fifty per cent on the company's money over Chinese New Year?

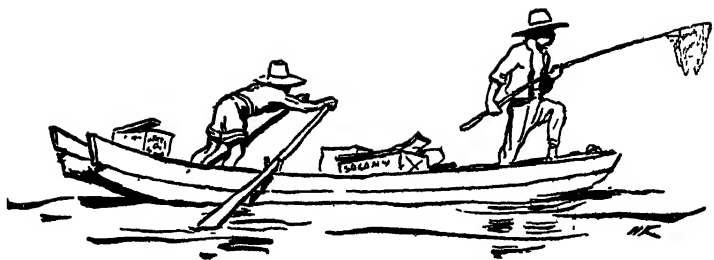
At this point of just sitting down and waiting unless a man is of the stuff of his homesteading forefathers, he cuts and runs. But the companies have found that even really truly pioneers cannot be tested too severely. It is not wise in this first testing to have the odds too much against a man as it would be if there were added to the enticements of that white man's community a man's bride.

His own forty days' temptation in the wilderness is all a man should fight at one time. This he needs to have placed far behind him before he encounters

his wife's temptation. Imagine him in his highly sensitive first moment of loneliness in the interior when he is just settling down to his first job of waiting, getting a letter from his young bride telling him of her loneliness and fear! For despite the general friendliness of these villages of ours, each woman must have her original tussle with the strangeness, newness, and frightening tinyess of these frontier towns. You can see it would not do for a man to endure his own and his wife's temptation at the same time. It is too much. Thus it is that our little towns have this strange paradox: all men come to them as celibates and all women as brides.

These are America's hidden towns—unknown and unsung, but belonging. For their limitations or their excesses, their privations or their luxuries I make no apologies. They are the outgrowth of America's expanding trade as the towns of the middle west are of America's agriculture.

For these my home towns half the globe distant from my sisters' in America I bear the vigorous affection of the frontier woman for the civilization she has helped to create. We have conceived them out of pride of race and love of home. From the travail of our homesick longings they have been made. These queer little fly-by-night communities. Their spirit is a mingled spirit of the wanderer, homesteader and the *esprit de corps* of the corporation.



CHAPTER V

THE COMPANY HOUSE

As to the actual houses in these towns, I wonder if my sisters in America could even conceive of them. Most women make their homes an expression of themselves. We love them as we love our clothes, because they are the mantles of our souls. But for the wife of the frontier business man this mantle is a ready-made garment, the company house. Each house of the company goes by a number, and the furniture within is not the choice of the mistress. Oh dear me no! Our stay in any one house is too uncertain. One cannot move beds, tables, mirrors and kitchen stoves every few months or even every two years. In the eight years since I began this homesteading in China have I not moved seven times and packed twice for "home leaves" in America?

The furniture in our houses belongs to the company. It is standardized like an orphan's uniform or a ward patient's bedgown and each piece, like the garments of an unknown orphan or ward patient,

goes by a number. Somewhere on their surfaces, (the company prefers it to be in a conspicuous place so it can be easily checked,) there is nailed to each a tiny brass number.

And the houses themselves! They are anything that could be secured in the still haphazard treaty laws with China: Chinese houses rented from month to month from Chinese landlords, foreign houses leased for indefinite periods from Chinese, houses owned by the company. It is just according to what China will allow in any particular city. It makes for us a kind of richman, poorman, beggarman, thief existence. In quick succession we may live in a Chinese palace, a Chinese warehouse, a vacated sing-song house, an English terrace house, a thatched-roofed half-Chinese, half-white man's house, a wonderful many-windowed, many-chimneyed house like this one I have occupied since the evening before last, a house with a French touch, a junk turned into a houseboat, a luxurious apartment in a city where according to extraterritoriality the white man can own property. These have all been company houses at one time or another. Thus do we take on and put off glory. Surely there is no assured grandeur for the homesteader on this frontier of trade where his soul may sit and bask in comfort.

As to the location of these houses that, too, is in the hands of the erratic gods. There are company houses by Chinese fish-markets and company houses

on the banks of lovely rivers. I know one up a ravine by a chattering mountain stream, this one on an island and another one on the edge of the City of the Long Sand, overlooking a crowded native bund where fish is dried. Like the house, the location must be accepted with equanimity. Like the vagabond or tramp, the frontiersmen of trade must accept with philosophy feast or famine. Uncertainty is his portion.

Aside from the company furniture there have been but two constant factors in this eight years' homesteading of mine. On week days, over each of my houses has floated the blue flag of the company, and on Sundays, the stars and stripes.

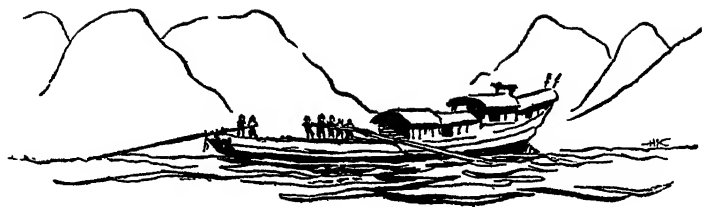
Part II

In Retrospect

My Past Cycles of Homesteading

“Four times a fire against the cold
And a roof against the rain,
Sorrow fourfold and joy fourfold
The four winds bring again.”

KIPLING.



CHAPTER VI

THE HOUSE THAT WAS A STAGE

TODAY after eight years of this commercial vagabondage we have for the first time come upon feast—eight years during which time I have made and unmade homes with the rapidity with which China has in that time made and unmade her governments. Just about to take over this company house, start once more in homesteading, I feel for each one of these past bits of homemaking a little of nostalgia. Each house which I have lived in has had built into its four walls parts of our two lives—never to be repeated first experiences, and moods of the first days of our marriage, the happy, daring adventures and light-hearted vagabondage of pioneer beginners, the danger and sickness which came later and which bound us together with a peculiar intensified love, periods of solitude which wrought in us a deep capacity for each other's companionship. All these experiences and moods, the background for today's beginnings, are real to me now only as I shut my

eyes, and look back over the succession of these homes of mine dotted over China.

My first home to which I went in 1914 as a bride was in Newchwang, for me doubly a frontier town. Not only in going there did I go to the frontier of America's trade, I went also to the frontier of China, situated as this town was on the tide-washed delta of the Liao River, in the outer province of Manchuria, outside the Great Wall. All the year knee-deep in mud or dust, it was a bleak enough place to test the courage of any company bride.

It was with mingled emotions on an August afternoon that I first saw this city. We got off the "Peking-Moukden" Express at what appeared to be a way-station and hurried on to a ferry. In ten minutes it took us across the Liao River and landed us on the pontoon on the Newchwang side. So far so good. Under the red evening sun lay the river between its flat banks, with floating junks as still as lily pads upon it. The bund bustled with Eastern life. The red sashes of the Customs men splashed color into the universal blue of the Chinese crowd. It was only when we took rickshas for the English terrace house which was to be our home that I awoke with a start to the future. This ride in the ferry marked the end of my wedding journey, the glamor of which still hung over me as, after one has looked at the sun, light-spots hang in the air bewildering one's vision.

All company women come thus ill-prepared to their

pioneering for they all alike come from the dazzle of fantastic or romantic wedding journeys. Either we are married in America on the men's "home leaves" and have for our wedding journeys the trip to the East, or we meet our future husbands in the nearest beauty spot to their stations and are married there in a romantic Eastern setting. I had done the latter. Two weeks before I had been married in Tientsin. Then we had gone on a strangely picturesque and highly unconventional wedding journey—a journey as removed from the wedding journeys of my friends in the Chicago suburb from which I came as my married homes were to be from my childhood's home.

In a Peking cart we had traveled along the triumphal way that Chinese emperors and empresses used to take to their last resting place, to a Buddhist temple under the very shadow of the Great Wall! As guests in this temple, we had spent the days that our skyscraper had allotted to us for our honeymoon. Each day of it we wandered under the whispering pines, into the sombre memorial halls with their dragon-embossed, teak pillars, out into the metallic brilliance of the marble courtyards where great, white dragons were chiseled into the balustrades and white marble, snarling, dragon heads buttressed the terraces. Here, where the pomp and pride of emperors had been laid in dust, we began our life together. At night we stood in the window of the temple guest room and looked down over the

sweep of the valley lying below us in the moonlight and watched the path of the moon travel up from the valley into the shadow of the Great Wall.

All the past day as we had journeyed in the train from Peking towards our first home in Newchwang my mind and body had been steeped in the contentment of my husband's presence and the richness of the senses which the East like a juggler had wrapped about me in these two weeks. My ears were still filled with the midnight chant of the priests, the clang of their cymbals, the low chanting murmur "To the great Buddha, to the great Buddha in the lotus," which in the dead of night had awakened us, sleeping fitfully in the guest room on the stone-bed mortared into the wall, under the window, where the moonlight cast the latticed pattern of the temple window over us. Now, it was clear and distinct,—that chant—now it was blended in my memory with the murmur of the pines among which the temple stood.

My mind still envisioned the epic-like quality of that oldest and newest journey—my wedding journey which I had taken in a Chinese cart through the Chinese countryside. Similar in simplicity had been the wedding journeys of my forbears riding in ox-carts through the clearings in the forest to their own new cabins. Like them we had traveled in rigorous simplicity. Ours was a two-wheeled cart without springs, drawn by mules. But there had the analogy



*FROM the red-gold grain giant stone
men had stood forth.*

stopped, for the simplicity of our journey was shot through and through with the pagan richness of the Orient. From the red gold grain around us, giant stone men and beasts had stood forth, speaking of pagan pomp and ceremony. Had I but realized it, here was my key to the future. All my pioneering was to have this strange confusing mixture of the rigorous simple living typical of the life of my homesteading ancestors, mingled with the pagan ease and grandiose pomp of the East. However, I did not grasp this, that day, on the train going to my first home. For the most part as I looked at this two weeks in retrospect on that August day as we journeyed on the Peking-Moukden Express toward Newchwang, my mind was occupied with the fantastic extravagant elements of my wedding journey. So it is with most company brides. That is why we come ill-prepared to our pioneering.

But, as we left the Newchwang pontoon, I realized suddenly that my honeymoon was at an end. My now startled senses grasped the frontier aspect of this white man's trading post. We rode quickly past the few large buildings of the place, the Russian bank standing at the first corner, the imposing Japanese consulate filling the next corner and the low gray house of the Russian consulate across from it. Then on to a kind of town square where Chinese beggars besieged us for coppers and *wonks* roamed seeking bits of refuse. The dry dust of the sun-baked

delta of the Liao rose around us in clouds and clung to the moist bodies of our ricksha men like stucco to a wall. The high walls built round the houses which bordered the square, the uncared-for look of everything outside these walls, the close-barred gates, the treeless, dusty, Chinese streets and square all spoke of how alien to these surroundings must be the life of the people who lived in the big houses, only the second stories of which we could see above those high walls.

Five minutes, and we had turned off this windy sun-baked square into a gravel enclosure which did duty for both garden and walk to four English terrace houses. Without warning our coolies dropped the shafts of our rickshas on the steps of the second of these and we were catapulted on to the doorstep of our first home. We stood silently on that little stone doorstep waiting for my husband's houseboy to open the door, looking wonderingly up at its high narrow front. In its own way this English terrace-house appeared as unfamiliar to me as had the temple. Even though it looked substantial and not without distinction with its bow windows, my heart beat very loud and not altogether with confidence as I stood there in front of this strange dwelling in this strange, bleak town and realized that here not only my life with my husband but with the frontier was really to begin. Once within, we passed through it with almost absurd rapidity.

In the hall I just had time to say—"I like the twisting, spindle-rail stairway. Too bad they used that ugly brown paint on it." My husband hanging up his hat in the closet under the stairs looked over his shoulder and gave the banisters only a moment's consideration as if they did not warrant more. "We're not in America," he said with a new note in his voice—the note of the American business man getting back on his job. "We have to make things do in China, dear."

"Here's the drawing-room," he finished. Taking my hand he drew me gently to him and on to the hearth. I did not criticise this time. "This is the only thing I care about," I whispered, "our hearth—and the sunlight," I added. Until then I had not noticed that the four long bow windows reached from floor to ceiling, filling the front wall of the room and throwing their pattern in sunshine on the gray, painted floor.

"Now the dining-room," cried my husband. Pivoting on one foot, I surveyed it. It was like as two peas to the drawing-room, except for red tiles in place of brown in its fireplace and a door on its back wall.

"What does that lead to?" I asked.

"Oh, the kitchen and such things," answered my husband, "do you want to see those too?"

"Yes, everything," and I opened the door to discover my house dwindling quickly away into a

narrow, dark passageway, a wee, black pantry and a wee-er, black-er kitchen.

"Scullery" I cried with delight at applying a word which sounded like this dark spot. My husband smiled in relief at my mood. It seems he had been a little fearful of my attitude towards this company house where he had been living as a bachelor.

We went on gaily now through the wee, dark servants' rooms across the court from the kitchen, followed the outside backstairs up to the wings above to the diminutive, dark bathrooms, forward into infinitesimal, dark dressing-rooms, forward into the two bedrooms which stood respectively over the drawing- and dining-rooms.

"It's like a stage," I exclaimed with wonder as we emerged from those dingy, dark wings into the bedrooms, which like the rooms below were filled with the peculiar gold light of Manchuria that I was to come to know and love so well.

Perhaps I thought this because my imagination had been so recently awakened by the chant of the priests and the gorgeous trappings of the memorial halls. Perhaps it was because, as we stood for a moment there in the bow windows upstairs, I saw suddenly to the edge of the settlement of white men. Why, it was no bigger than the dress circle of a theatre! Beyond stretched the half-tamed frontier, the brown expanse of Manchuria, over which the sun was setting. And the town and the primitive stretches of

brown prairie seemed crowding upon and looking in at those bow windows which as below reached from floor to ceiling.

Later I discovered it was not a bad analogy. We were "on stage" in those front rooms, for all the show and ceremony of our days went on there. All the business and commotion of our living went scurrying up and down those dark passageways as does the business of a play through the wings of a stage. Our soup arrived by way of this wing as did the entrée and the joint of our formal dinner, which were handed in through the butler's window by one of the stage hands who rarely appeared on the stage proper. He was too well disciplined by the stage manager, the houseboy, whom he held in awe as did I. Having served my husband for six bachelor years, the boy had made himself both indispensable and all-important. With Oriental suavity he managed to convey this information to me on the very first morning after my husband had gone to the office. So I continually occupied those front rooms like a principal in a play, while the coolie was forever pat-patting along the passageways.

I shall never forget those first days. Will any company bride ever forget hers? I would look first at the furniture around me in this strange house that was supposedly my home. This furniture seemed simply to belong to the "act." How well known that furniture or pieces like it have since become!

Every line of it has grown to be part and parcel of me. I surveyed with interest each little brass plate. The chest of drawers in the bedroom was numbered 608. That meant they were one of the latest models. The dining-room table bore the number 56. It was a member of a long discarded type. And the dining-room chairs belonged to a vintage neither ancient nor modern. But that was not the really important thing about these numbers. They stood for my responsibility to the company for their care. Twice a year, my husband told me, some one from the office would take inventory of my house and I should give account of my stewardship. Thus did I in the very beginning feel the sign and the seal of the great oil company put upon my home. This was a part of being a corporation woman.

Two weeks after the end of my wedding journey with its days of gorgeous texture and our entrance into the terrace house I found myself living alone except for the yellow men who attended me. The manager of the company for Manchuria, a sturdy Cape Cod man, had come out to China forty years before as a scullion boy on a sailing vessel and was a believer in labor, especially for the beginners. So at the end of the two weeks he sent my husband about his business of inspecting the agents in the interior. The circles my husband put on his pocket-calendar around the days he traveled that winter showed me at the end that I had lived without him



*WE go on fantastic wedding journeys
to temples like this.*

in the terrace house seventy per cent of the time—two hundred and forty-five days. Vaguely, I followed his activities by his letters written on leaves torn from his notebook and mailed from strange, unheard of towns. Sometimes when it seemed as if I could bear it no longer, he would walk in suddenly, unexpectedly. But as often as not, something would come up at the office which would take him out again the same day. Never for one moment could he relax his attention from those astute, hard-bitten, Chinese, general merchants who sold our oil.

Day after day through the brief autumn with its intense and brilliant sunshine and through the winter, I continued to sit in that curiously stage-like house close to the little fireplace for warmth, forever listening to the souging of the terrific, giant wind along the passageways and in the chimneys, forever watching through the long bow windows the meagre white village. The second stories of the houses of retired sea-captains, pilots, corporation "tyrans," and consuls showed above the high garden walls; the squat chimneyless dwellings of the Chinese everywhere snuggled against them; the Chinese in their padded winter clothes like clumsy animals endlessly passed and repassed.

I watched in what I thought was a detached sort of way the intense striving life of the white man's town with its personal and national jealousies, jealousies exaggerated by isolation. The town like

the house always seemed artificial and unreal against its background of frozen plains and ice-bound river, indescribably fierce and relentless-looking under the flying snow and dust of the winter storms—a half-tamed land which claimed all my attention every time I looked out of the bow windows. I thought it was the only influence exerted over me that winter—except the brilliant sunshine which was fierce and strong like the land. Only after we had left Newchwang behind did I realize that that intense, striving, international Main Street had also left an ineradicable impression upon me. I can still, if I shut my eyes, see members of that community who found an American woman, her ways and her speech, odd. You see I was the one American woman in the town. There are American words that to this day I use self-consciously. Even now I can feel how shrinkingly I faced the footlights of curiosity and publicity which played about me after I innocently served ice-cream at a November dinner.

Every member of that community I find is all but as distinct to me today as the members of my own family, quaint types, many of them with odd adventurous pasts. The town was unusual for the China coast in that men for some reason retired to this bleak spot. The place was largely made up of sea captains who had sailed their own sailing vessels in and out of the China ports as they had one by one been opened to foreign trade, pilots versed in the lore

of the China coast, men who had made and lost fortunes in straw braid and treaty port property, men like "the boss" who had come out as boys before the mast or as scullions and had never been back. And of course these men's wives. They were sturdy women who had companioned their husbands through both danger and hardship, had their babies at sea in sailing vessels without benefit of physician and been parted from them almost as soon as they were born for this kind of life was not for children, known them henceforth only by letter and picture. Some of them had been through the Boxer troubles. They had indeed seen service and now looked upon Newchwang as their hard-won bit of the universe and proposed to indulge their power accordingly.

In the intricate social system of this Cosmopolitan Main Street which was far more hide-bound ten years ago than now, beginners, number threes and fours in an office, held no social rank among "tyfans" (managers). And this town seemed to me to be made up of "tyfans." Only our own office had beginners. Thus nothing but the crumbs of society were for me that winter, and crumbs are quickly consumed.

But somehow during that winter I managed to gain the rare possession of a friend. The constant shifting, the exaggerated individuality that most of us develop through solitude and much homesteading initiative raise well-nigh insurmountable barriers against friendship. We learn to make acquaintances quickly with

no inquiry as to the antecedents of people if they be good fellows and usually let it go at that. Nevertheless, an English woman made me this rare gift. Now there are no better friends in all the world than the English when you finally break through their reserve. They have a gift for giving of themselves both naturally and freely. This friend of mine, a *typan's* wife, took me into her life so simply that I did not think often, after that, of the social barriers that Main Street of British and European women had erected.

But I wanted above everything else to be out in that primitive land with my husband. It held a fascination for me as it does to this day, a fascination which I am unable to explain, for in general the company women shudder over the thought of such primitive experiences. However, I got little chance that first winter as it was against the policy of the company and we were in no position to ask for special privileges. Our general manager in Shanghai was at that time a rough and swearing pioneer who did not suffer wives for his men gladly. He had come to China when it was a man's country and he wanted it to remain so. The wisest thing a wife could do was to remain as inconspicuous as possible.

It was only later that that sturdy New Englander, local manager for Manchuria, the "boss" as we affectionately called him, with his peculiar insight into each employee's needs secured the privilege for

me to travel upon occasion with my husband. He himself liked to see partnership in marriage, and as long as I did not slow up the travel or affect in any way the output of labor on my husband's part he did not mind a woman "messing in." I shall not set down those experiences here because they were unique to my own life and this is a record of what might befall any corporation woman. I mention them because they affected my whole outlook, giving me more insight into my husband's problems and deepening to an unimagined degree our companionship.

But for the most part that first winter through long days and nights I plumbed the depths of my being, finding there a growing capacity for solitude which had lain dormant within me but which was the heritage given me by the women of America who had homesteaded from Massachusetts to California, who had lived solitary lives in isolated cabins, and looked out upon great new stretches of American prairie as I now looked out upon these Asian plains. I thought about these forbears of mine a great deal that winter. How alike and unlike were their experience and mine. The distance from our old homes, the untamed land were the same, but only in the plantation life of the South had there ever been in any American pioneering this soft luxury I had of being waited upon hand and foot.

There was also the problem of the discipline of that race who served us. Our homes like those of

the Southern plantations were little kingdoms where we were supposed to rule supreme. How had Martha Washington and other women of the South handled their black people? I asked that question many times that first winter while I was learning from many a failure how to manage the Chinese servant.

But after all I watched rather than participated in things that first winter. I had not yet got down to the real business of homesteading. I was busy that first winter with my contemplations and my difficult adjustments to mingled hardship and too much leisure. That terrace house never took on reality. I never lost in it my play-acting feeling.

In the spring we moved from the terrace into a rambling old house with a huge neglected garden. The occasion for this move I have forgotten in the mêlée of future moves, but I have not forgotten that the second story of this house had been burned off years before and that a tin roof had been somewhat nonchalantly put over the first story, a roof that leaked like a sieve in the rainy season. Neither have I forgotten that underneath the dining-room there was a brick-lined cellar cunningly devised to house the tides beneath my dining-room. In summer, twice a day, coming boldly up the Liao and along the streets, they flowed into this receptacle and had to be baled out through a trapdoor. Neither have I forgotten that I could sit in my living-room and look down the long hall through the entrance door

of my house, across the neglected garden and see the huge, brown sails of junks going by on the Liao River; the river was on the other side of the street and hidden from my view by the bunding wall and a castle-like warehouse. So, seemingly detached, those sails would poise framed in my doorway like enormous butterflies with folded wings. Then they would glide majestically away. They were the one bit of beauty in Newchwang, except the sunshine and the sky.



CHAPTER VII

WE GO TO LIVE IN A GODOWN

IN the following autumn, a little over a year from the day we first went to Newchwang, just after we had induced our Chinese landlord to build us a fireplace in our living-room, we were transferred. There is a superstition among us that any real effort towards "settling in" brings a transfer. And there was this new fireplace as proof of the superstition. (I remember every line of that fireplace. We designed its chimney-piece and it was the first of many we afterwards erected. In fact, we developed a regular flair for fireplaces.)

It was an epoch day for me this day of our first transfer. I had heard others, older in the service, tell of how sudden the company transfers always were.

And ours came quite according to the conventions, that is, on the day when it was farthest from our minds. I felt particularly domestic that wonderful September morning, filled full of the woman's instinct to put down roots. I was very happy as I went about setting to rights the living-room after the coolie had swept up the last dust of the masons.

Homesickness for America was behind me; zest for my new life was upon me. I had put from me that passive spirit of the terrace house. Like Christian I had met the danger of my wayfaring and left it behind. It is temptation paramount to be passive in China. If you are, indolence soon fastens to you with the power of a narcotic. After that you remain forever in the hands of the Chinese servant. But I had entered into my kingdom, become a homesteader. A few days before I had even gained courage to dismiss that boy of my husband's bachelor days. "Missie" now held the keys to the coal and food supplies. I ruled in my little kingdom. I was very happy. My friend lived next door.

I had hung the last curtain in the living-room, when the gate clicked, and my husband came up the path. I could scarcely believe it was twelve o'clock. As I met him at the door I felt with peculiar intensity that anchored feeling of a married woman with her home secure and her man to protect her. And my husband's first words were, "How soon can you pack and get off?"

"Where? Two days," I answered him all in one breath.

"Guess—and you'd better start then this afternoon," he replied. And when I could not guess he told me it was Antung down on the Korean border. No wonder I had not thought of it because it was a new sub-station of Newchwang. My husband was to open it.

I did it—all the packing in two days. It was well that I had not eaten the narcotic of indolence, for the days of our struggles were upon us. These were indeed the days when the company was opening up virgin territory. That rough pioneer, the general manager, did not willingly suffer wives for his men although he was married himself. Because of a few signal examples of women who had been overcome by homesickness and difficulties he judged against us as homesteaders. The men who married, even though they had passed with honors through the years of their novitiate, he eyed with suspicion, and gave them their test by fire before he again regarded them with the same trust as he had had for them as bachelors.

Part of our test lay in the fact that we must live a very isolated existence. We were the only white representatives of American business in Antung. Then there were the Commissioner of Customs and the American consul. That should have given us three white women but after the first few months the number was reduced to two. A new commissioner

was appointed and his wife stayed in England. That left myself and the wife of the American consul. She was working hard over a rambling barracks of a house which belonged to the Japanese and had been leased to our government. It stood on a hill just outside the city. Her first child was born in that house that winter. We did not see each other very often. We lived too far apart and were too busy.

The second part of the test lay in the securing of a house in this town of Antung, a frontier town, in a frontier province, on the frontiers of the oil trade. The mills of the white man's business grind slowly in China. The common people never lose their suspicion of foreigners. They delay in ways known only to the East, all negotiations as to living quarters, although they want the foreign business. Also they put up their rents enormously to compensate for the risks they take in having these foreign creatures about. It's a bit like being an outcast all one's days to reside in the East. One thing helps, for even as the Chinese put on their armor of superiority you put on yours, and live serene and full of pride as do they. Was there ever a race that did not feel themselves superior to all the others? I wonder. You can see that the opening of a foreign business office and residence in any city is thus of necessity fraught with many delays, but when you are the first foreign firm to come to live in a town, as we were, it is doubly so.

Then, too, there were no Chinese homes in Antung to rent. To the Chinese also this frontier was regarded as a man's town; homes and women had nothing to do with it. Their wives and their children they had left safe in their ancestral homes "Within the Wall." Everywhere I went I saw none but men. The streets were full of them, the shops were full of them, and all the things displayed for sale in the shops were men's things. Only the crudest of Chinese household utensils, the sort of things that men would buy to carry on a rude kind of housekeeping, could be bought. In the Chinese business houses a hundred or two hundred men and boys spent their days. They slept in long rows on the heated, brick beds which extended down two sides of huge, cellar-like rooms. All except the managers, they had tiny rooms with brick beds of their own. In the courts behind, servant-men cooked for them all. In the big Chinese restaurants all over the town were Chinese chefs who served the dishes which men like. The only Chinese women I saw were the poorest peasants and that other type of women who frequent every frontier.

Where did I not live in that second fall after my marriage? To begin with in a "foreign-style" hotel run by Japanese over on the Korean shore. A kind of ghost of the white world was this hotel with its two floors of bedrooms and its pretentious dining-room. It was imposing in white napery and had a menu card as long as the Waldorf but into which no

one save ourselves ever peered during all the time of our stay. Occasionally a Japanese official tried the foreign food for an experience, making loud sucking noises to show his appreciation as he would over his own. How those noises did echo in the big empty dining-room where I always felt impelled to whisper. I was in danger of another attack of homesickness with my days here as empty almost as the hotel, when they came to an abrupt end. We found we must give up this hotel life.

This was while we were negotiating for a shop with an inner court that could be used as a home. The Chinese held out for an exorbitant rental to be paid a year in advance. The Shanghai office said we must wait for better terms. Were we not comfortably situated in a hotel? Certainly we could not complain. It was difficult to explain that after we paid our bill for the month it did not leave us enough even for our washing. This was our test, and it might appear that we were complaining or that wives were an expensive affair. We felt it was up to us to manage this little matter ourselves. It is always a source of real pride to me that I did not accept my husband's offer to stay on in the hotel even if we had to borrow money.

Through our Chinese friends we managed to rent the end of a sugar warehouse. I was down to the real business of homemaking now. With every woman's instinct within me, I fought that sugar warehouse

to make it a home. Sometimes I confess I cried secretly with despair. "Why should one endure like this for business?" Then I would think, "So might the women of the covered wagon have thought and America would never have been settled."

Sometimes even now, in passing a godown, or on board ship where they are taking cargo when I smell the sweet, sickish odor of sugar in quantity there leaps up before me that end of the agent's sugar godown in Antung, and within me in a tumult rise all the conflicting feelings of those days. I feel again my delight and pride that my husband had at last a chance to stand alone. Never since he has been a main-station *typan* have I had the thrill of those days when as head of that little sub-station of Antung on the border of Korea he had his first chance to show whether he had the ability to manage a territory. I feel again within me the strength as of ten men rising up to struggle with that sugar godown, intent on not yielding in the test of our endurance. I feel again that sense of being a co-laborer with my husband. I catch again the strange sweet elixir of our early comradeship. I can feel also the ache of my arms and feet when each night I lay down to sleep. But all this was temporary. The agent was only being courteous in lending us his godown until the company arranged to lease a place of their own.

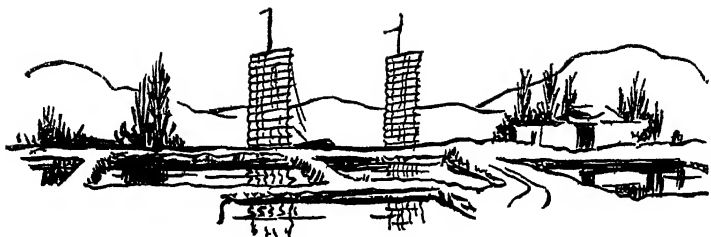
Two months later the mills of foreign business completed their grinding, Shanghai's general manager,

arbiter of our lives; the Cape Cod man, manager of Manchuria, part arbiter of our lives; the Chinese of Antung and my husband came to an agreement over the rental of office and house combined. It fell on a dramatic day. I had finished everything in the sugar go-down, that is as near as it ever could be finished, and was surveying with contentment the work of my hands. I was ready to rest in the feeling that it was good. I had that sheltered, married woman's feeling which I had not had since that day in Newchwang when we were transferred. That should in itself have given me warning that something was going to happen.

It was late afternoon, almost time for my husband to come home for tea. The office occupied a little room under the eaves in the agent's shop. I was unpacking my dishes, arranging them on shelves in the kitchen. There was no other place to put them. The shelves were fastened with heavy wire to the beams above. We were proud of the shelves as we were of everything else in the house because everything was a makeshift, and an ingenious contrivance of our own.

The cook was baking cookies for tea and the smell of the spice actually transcended the dank smell of the sugar in the rooms beyond. Contentment possessed every corner of my soul when there was a cracking, tumbling sound and lo, the shelves with their load of dishes lay in a heap on the dirt floor!

Without care for anything else I sat down in the midst to mourn as did Rachel for her children. As out of the débris I picked here and there a cherished plate or a cup, my husband came in swinging a telegram high above his head and exclaiming "We're going to move. It's all arranged. We've got a decent price for a lease and Shanghai has telegraphed their approval." It was then that I burst into tears much to the consternation of my husband who no doubt wondered as to the inconsistency of women, because when he tried to comfort me for the broken dishes he found I was crying over the completed lease, the very thing for which until today I had prayed in season and out. Neither could I explain, and probably it was the inconsistency of women who build themselves into their homes even if they are as crude as the one I had just completed.



CHAPTER VIII

WE MOVE TO THE "CAVE"

I DRIED my tears, and after tea went forth with my husband to inspect the empty godown. It was not so unlike the one we were then living in as to fill me with great enthusiasm. It smacked too much of a repetition of the arduous labor just finished, but we were to have it all to ourselves and certain things like wood floors were to be added by the company and we would, of course, forego the too close companionship of sugar. There was a huge dim Chinese kitchen which we decided to make into a living-room. It took us a long time to decide it, for we were trying to do the impossible—devise a way by which four distinct buildings placed on four sides of a square might be utilized, so that we should not have to go outdoors to carry on our ordinary everyday activities. Even a quick dart across a court has its disadvantages when the thermometer points to ten below zero. At last we decided to have the bedroom and living-room along one side and the dining-

room across the court. We could always strain a point and have the boy bring our meals to us in the living-room on a particularly cold day. I found later that going to see the cook in the kitchen was something like preparing for an arctic expedition. At the least I had to don fur coat, storm boots, and a fur cap.

After we decided these momentous things I sat in the Chinese kitchen looking at the cobwebs and soot of I don't know how many years hanging from the rafters. To the accompaniment of my husband's final arrangements with the present occupants to vacate as soon as possible, I planned how best I could turn it into a comfortable abode. I sat with my hands in my lap, a little tired with the experience of the day, and the kitchen in spite of its cobwebs and soot wove a spell over me. The little flames of light playing about the openings in the brick-stove, the smell of burning wood in the air put me in a kind of trance. All sorts of vivid pictures leaped up on the dusty paper-windows, around the gesticulating Chinese and my husband in their midst. I saw as so often the great tall skyscraper to which we belong. The picture of it would soon hang in the front room of this godown which was going to be the office. I could already hear my husband calling me to come in and see if he were hanging it straight. Across from it in the space between the windows would hang the picture of the founder of the company. I often wondered if he ever thought of us—

the outpost men and women of this huge business he had created. Still without knowing each other were we all bound together into the whole of a corporation. Thus on the limbo of my thoughts of how best to make clean, to paper, to adorn the latest addition to the great oil business, the humble sister of the skyscraper, there hovered the face of the "oil king" as the Chinese called him.

Well, we papered the partitions and the round roof beams because there was no other way to hide the dirt of time. The office occupied the front room along the street. The house followed the other three sides of the court behind. Its sturdy windowless back walls sat plumb against our Chinese neighbors' back walls. The Chinese kitchen had now been made the length of three roof-beam spaces; namely, twenty-one feet. It was to be the living-room. At one end of it we erected our fireplace. By this time we had developed a kind of a mania for fireplaces and had invented a portable type which we could take out of one house and re-erect in another for six Mexican dollars.

We now lived among the voices of industry! At the back of us we were shadowed by the squat tower of a bean mill. On one side of us lived a colony of weavers. Their machines click-clacked through our days and far into our nights. Very nearly did the East penetrate into what we felt at all cost we must keep inviolate, the Americanism of our home. All

day the pulse, the beat of the Chinese city, the cries of the street, the uneven rhythm of the hand-loom, the thud, thud of the mill grinding the soya bean invaded the desired silences of our rooms and at night we could hear the sighs, the groans of that other race that slept just a hand's breadth away. They reached us through those close touching back walls.

"The cave," the American consul called this house of ours, because of its small eye-like windows opening on the inner court, which gave to our rooms a dim and cavernous light. Odd looked the light brown chiffonier, the white Simmons beds and light oak library table—the company furniture—in the dim recesses of these Chinese rooms. Falling over them were pearl-colored, curious shaped shadows from the paper-paned windows done in eastern lattice-work.

Within this improvised western home of ours high ceremony existed. As I said, the old houseboy had gone when we had moved out of the terrace house, and I had lost forever my acquiescent spirit. The new boy had served in the house of His Britannic Majesty's Representative in Harbin and he brought with him a keen sense of ceremony and a cook who had formerly been an actor and who had the dramatic touch. Between them they saw to it that we should never "lose face." Was my husband not a manager here? Surely there was no one above him in his office. Of course there was no one below him either

in this one man sub-station. That the Chinese ignored.

We must have a second boy although we never could scrape together a dinner party of over six. When "Missie" remained hard-hearted and refused, the boy hired one himself getting the wages out of "Missie" in devious ways known only to the Chinese. Now when we sat down to "tiffin" there was a servant to stand behind each of our chairs. As for tea, the service was worthy, at least, of an ambassador. I never expect to have anything to compare with it again. On the dot of five the small boy clad in immaculate white came as an outrider to his greatness, the head boy, who waited in the hallway beyond. "The child," as we called him, placed the tea-table and then solemnly departed. A pause. Now there entered the "number-one" boy empty-handed, his eyes sternly riveted to the back of his outrider's head who bore the tea-cloth. The next time they came "the child" advanced empty handed fulfilling his true part as outrider, while the boy bore aloft the tea-tray, on it all the silver and china that had escaped the catastrophe in the sugar godown. It made me a bit dizzy at first to jump from the hard struggles of the day with dirt and inconvenience to this ceremony at tea-time but it, too, was in accordance with the East, where pomp not comfort is the mark of high estate.

But even with this all willing assistance from my

servants, when my husband was off on a trip it was no easy matter to hold against his return that bit of American atmosphere we had at so much pains wrested from our Chinese surroundings.

But it was now that I went most often with my husband into the interior. I pass over those experiences. My memory today is entirely for my homes. But the marvellous moment of our return when we stepped within our wooden doors, slid the heavy wooden bar to behind us, belongs to this chronicle. That was the moment when despite all discrepancies and lacks in this godown-house we felt our own civilization flood over us.

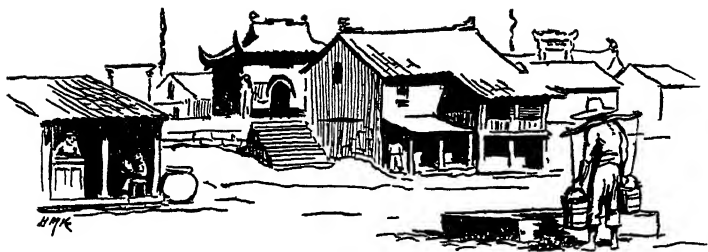
At this point in our struggles in the fall of the second year of our marriage, 1916, our "home leave" fell due. On the way home to America we fumed at every delay. We wore ourselves out on the steamer with our desire to push it and make it go faster. At last we arrived in a high state of expectancy and yearning. But, oh weak and frail humanity, we had not altogether divested ourselves of the robes of our importance which we had worn in our tiny white man's world, and could it be that there' clung to us a little of the manner of people with ten servants? I am afraid we had forgotten to shake the dust of our foreignness from our feet. At any rate we found we had changed and that America had changed, or we thought she had. She was so very big to us after the little community of Antung.

You see this home-coming had fallen at the very height of the intensification of our personalities through homesteading. Made highly individual by isolation and initiative we continued to exert that intensified individualized spirit in America. We wanted to give our view of the war which was the British view and which was not popular as America had not yet come into it. We had seen so few white people that every one appeared to us a discovery. When we went into a store we wanted to talk with every clerk and tell him we had just got in from China. It seemed so very important, this just getting back. Of course, that made us appear queer. Nobody understood our high excitability over trifles. It looked like a pose. They could not know how we had hungered and thirsted for these little things.

And most of all our feelings were hurt because you, our fellow countrymen, persisted in thinking what we had done in pioneering was just a curious, picturesque way of life and not fundamental to our country. You see we had come home very proud, bringing the offering of our foreign service only to find that our mother country was not very interested in this contribution. She had many other things to think about. So, when our six months' vacation was over, we were glad to go back, feeling a little as a child would if its mother could get on without it. Perhaps all returning natives know this feeling. Ask some of the returned soldiers about it. Perhaps

Americans lack the art of the homecomer. Perhaps America is strangely unmoved by her homecomers, seeing them a bit as the elder brother saw the prodigal.

But strange and a little hard though was the getting back to "the cave" after the machine-made easy life of America!



CHAPTER IX

I CREATE MY BEAU BRUMMEL OF HOMES

IT now began to look as if we were to make this house among Chinese bean mills and weaving machines a permanent company house. Antung was not a treaty-port, and we could not buy land here, and whenever we tried to lease an empty spot on the hillsides outside the town some Chinese of anti-foreign bias would block the undertaking. Four times this happened that spring of our return. Then we were lucky and leased from an old woman a bit of land just large enough for a Chinese house. The Chinese contractor would not agree to put up any other kind. Spring had come and we were soon to occupy a brand new house amongst the hills!

The workmen were quietly making mud-bricks on the spot, when there came Chinese gentlemen saying we were building on their land! According to the title deeds, they said, the old woman's boundary line followed the watershed of the hill, and they wished to point out to us that the watershed on

that particular hill ran down from the ridge taking an L-shaped piece out of the old woman's property.

Nature does queer things in China, but this was the queerest. But what was a Chinese woman's understanding of a watershed against Chinese gentlemen, and what was ours against these same Chinese gentlemen? Our days now alternated between despair and hope. The Chinese woman never proved to the officials that the watershed ran other than in a right angle, but the American consul did in time bring enough pressure to bear upon the officials so that for a dollar a year we received the use of that corner of land. Our dining-room at least graced that hard-contested bit of land. I hasten over the vicissitudes, delays, and heartburnings of that spring. They are too poignant even yet in my memory.

Suffice it to say, that never will any other house mean to me what this one did, when finally it was completed. It is the nearest to having my own home that I shall probably ever come. I know every mud-brick that went into its inner walls and every gray fired-brick that veneered its surface. Did I not go daily to the hillside to prod those workmen into a little semblance of western speed, a pale shadow of western efficiency? June was the contract time for finishing. Half the time was gone and but a fourth of the house was built. With the strength of despair over the prospect of another summer amongst the weavers and bean mills we urged those workmen into

western speed. Incredible accomplishment! June! 1917! And there stood the little house built around three sides of a square with the other side open to the city and the Yalu River lying far away in the distance at its feet. Marvellous little house built almost by our own hands!

Strange, that that ill-built Chinese house should stand to me as our Beau Brummel of homes. Its walls were decidedly out of plumb. We had to go out into the court to get to the guest-room, We had to take three steps down to get from our bedroom to the bathroom because of the slope in the hillside. The approach to it was a steep pull up the hill through an alleyway impossible for a ricksha, made as it was of a gulley washed out by the rains. But nothing will ever shake my faith in that house not even the company woman who came later and thought it "just too impossible." She, you see, came to it as a bride and by way of the comforts of America; I came to it by the road of the sugar-godown and the cave.

I always see it with the eyes of love with which I looked upon it the day I had to leave it. For of course I did have to leave it and after only a year. It clutched at my heart that final day as I stood in the doorway of the living-room and looked at every familiar line of that room. It was the following summer and all its six large windows stood open to the cool twilight. I looked through them at the city lying below with dim, low candle power electric

lights outlining those streets that ran in curving lines to the river—just a faint silvery streak in the last light of day. I looked back at the room. Everything had about it the memory of a year of twilights that I had seen come and go in it since that first evening we had spent there the June before.

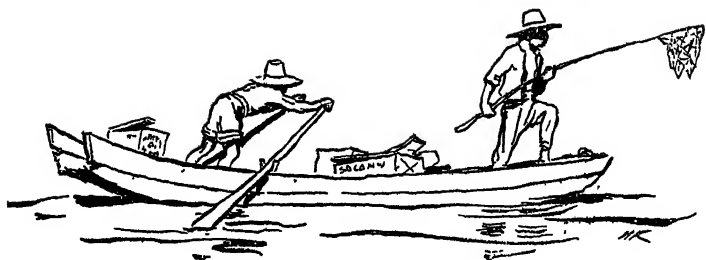
We were not packed up. The pain of parting was not to be mitigated for me by packing boxes or the débris of leave-taking. The books with all their loved titles stood in the bookcases along the opposite wall. "A famous wall of books," one of our friends had called it. It is only if you love books very much that you have them around you in the East. Otherwise they are too great a burden in this commercial game of "Going to Jerusalem." There was the tried and true fireplace with the picture of the quiet and benign scholar which always hung above it. There were the two Korean wedding chests I had bought on a trip to Korea. Under the windows they stood with their butterfly locks.

Peaceful shadows lay in the room. How could I leave it and my husband, for it was only I that was going away with the decree that I must not come back. I had loved this land as people love champagne and for the same reason. The excessive brown pigments of its earth and the intense yellow ones of its sunlight had for these years each day produced within me an elixir of energy, the energy that had built up the sugar-godown, the "cave," this quiet living-

room with its lookout view, the energy that had carried me with gaiety over the rough trails of Manchuria. A beautiful but dangerous potion which only the hardest constitution can stand.

And now it had become a cruel energy which would not let me rest and which laid bare the weakness of a childhood's accident. Like Moses I might not inherit the land for which I had toiled. I must go away, not to come back for years—if ever. So it was as an exile that I looked for the last time upon this sanctuary, my home. And so it was too that I carried its loved image in my heart, endowing it with many a grace it had not, as for the last time I went down the gully path into the wide dusty streets of Antung and thence to Shanghai, the Mecca for all of us when hard beset by war, or bandits, or climate.

Four months I lay in the hospital, having only the memory of that house where my husband now lived alone, to make his life real to me. For four months I built into it my longings for him, all comforting dreams of his activities, and all my concern for his loneliness. In those months that home came to be the "Land of my Heart's Desire," came to stand for the most cherished things of life, love and companionship. It was as lovely to me as only home can be to a woman weary of hospital routine, worn out with pain and homesickness. It was only when I came to grips with my next house that this "vision splendid" was partially obliterated.



CHAPTER X

THE HOUSE OF THE RAGGED MANTLE. WE PUT OFF
GLORY AND PUT ON THE VAGABOND'S GARB

THOSE years of experience in Newchwang and Antung now brought to my husband the managership of one of the sixteen main stations of the North China Division. Into the very midst of the green half of China in the fifth year of our marriage we went to the city of Hangchow, five hours from Shanghai by a railway which ended almost at our door. There also ended the twentieth century world. Beyond the city by a junk-decorated river stood this company house. But our raised estate brought us no added grandeur. Life is indeed haphazard and uncertain in this game of foreign trade. It is well in it never to count on the amenities of life and then you are never disappointed.

Hangchow was anti-foreign in a suave gentlemanly way. It had no idea of murdering you outright, but it limited the trade concession to a bit of low-lying land along the Grand Canal, a place in-

fested with malaria mosquitoes. Once this spot had at least held the advantage of being in the centre of trade which then came down the Grand Canal, but since the railway had been built the centre had shifted to the other side of the city. But the well-to-do aristocratic Chinese who made up the bulk of Hangchow and who looked upon the white man as a barbarian and an inferior, did not intend to see this white peril spread. They wanted the advantages of foreign trade without any of the disadvantages. Although this was a treaty-port they refused to let us follow the natural movement of trade, but they did not intend that that should keep them from any pecuniary advantages. One of the prominent citizens, a powerful man in the politics of Peking, reiterated over and over "The foreigner must stay in his place by the canal." Consistency thou art a jewel! He leased to the company at an outrageous sum, next door to the spot where all foreigners wanted to build, a playground of his where before he tired of it he had taken his wives and concubines for a day of flower gazing and tea sipping. Half pavilion, half crude copy of a white man's house, we called it "The House of the Ragged Mantle."

This once flower-gazing and tea-sipping pavilion of concubines was not exactly full of creature comforts. Three long, narrow rooms stood in a row under a thatched roof. There were no chimneys, the stovepipes went out through the windows. Com-

pany bachelors had occupied this somewhat unconventional company house for several years. The beds and chairs had an unhappy way of giving way under you thus disclosing to your heretofore trusting spirit that they no longer possessed four stout legs apiece. One leg at least on each one upon investigation appeared to have hidden wounds covered with many bandages of string. With my wits (I had little else as yet) and the amah's strength, we began on my now often repeated efforts to turn dreariness into comfort. But it was not quite the old stern struggle. The difference in climate had given it a softer atmosphere. And we had a new general manager in Shanghai.

The rough men who had had the hardihood and daring to break the way had done their work. The new general manager, college bred, had taken the place of the pioneer one who did not like women. He recognized the necessity of homes and women on this frontier of trade. That did indeed change the aspect of things.

Surely this house was the ragged mantle and torn shoe of the wanderer. Life indeed must sit unconventionally on one's shoulders in such a place. With vagabond fortitude we buried our heads in the bedclothes when the early morning fire divulged the fact that the bedroom stove with its long horizontal pipe, wending its way under the veranda roof to an ultimate upright position beyond the thatch, was



*IN summer and winter.
The Pagoda of Six Harmonies guarded the House of
the Ragged Mantle.*

hopelessly clogged. It spoke its rebellion by puffing soot all over the room if it did not receive the almost constant attention it demanded. We lay with our heads under the bedclothes cursing that stove with its horizontal pipe; we forgot about it when, carefully emerging from the bedclothes so as not to spill the soot in our eyes, we beheld outside our long glass door, twisting, brown cherry branches and beyond them a blue, Chinese river set with brown junks, watched over by a red pagoda. In the spring a pink haze filled our cottage, so great was the glow given off by the cherry blossoms that bloomed cottage-high around us.

The Chinese landlord who supplied us with only three rooms had seen to it that we did not "lose face." He had made the servants' quarters as large as the house! And were there not retainers on the place to the number of ten to smooth out the intricacies of stovepipes and oil-tin shower-baths? And besides down among the trees was there not a greenhouse half as large as our house, and did we not enter our garden-like grounds by way of a rounded doorway through which we caught glimpses of the warm, yellow thatch of our very own house among the trees? Why worry then about a small matter of rooms and chimneys? You see in the three years we lived in Hangchow our spirits of necessity learned to partake of vagabondage. And we did manage to erect a fireplace of sorts on the back wall of the living-room.

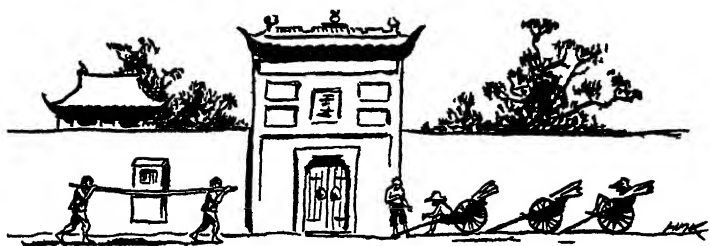
It was in 1921 that we left behind that touch-and-go existence and again went on "home leave." It is now six months later that we have been shot into the elegance of this prize house of the company, on this island, across from the City of the Long Sand. Eight large rooms it has with seventeen-foot high ceilings and five white-tiled bathrooms, a garden, a tennis court and an ice-plant. But these are no reasons for us to sit and bask in grandeur or choose complacency for the luxury of our souls. It behooves one to be humble. This house by the City of the Long Sand like the "House of the Ragged Mantle," or "The Cave," or any other company house, is more or less an accident. It just happened. It is no ultimate goal, but a halfway house in our lives as merchant wanderers. Tomorrow is indeed on the knees of the gods of big business. But for today there is this house by the City of the Long Sand.

Part III

*This Three-Year Cycle of Homesteading
We Belong Again to a Community*

“It ain’t the individual
Nor the army as a whole;
But the everlasting teamwork
Of every blooming soul.”

KIPLING.



CHAPTER XI

WHEN WE COME TO THE CITY OF THE LONG SAND

IT had been towards the close of our third "home leave" in America January, 1922, that our skyscraper told us that the City of the Long Sand was to be our station upon our return to China. Usually we sail under sealed orders, so to speak; that is, we do not know until we reach Shanghai whether we shall be stationed in the north with the temperature going down to twenty below zero in the winter or in the half-tropical city of Ningpo with the thermometer sometimes going up as high as eighty degrees on Christmas day. This foreign trade, this commercial game of "Going to Jerusalem" is indeed a pilgrimage and there are too many uncertainties in it to have anybody's residence an assured fact. Sickness, "home leaves," a man's marriage in the field which often necessitates transferring him to a place with better living quarters, resignations, failures, make our futures hard to predict. As I have said, the movement of any company person sets vibrating the common life of

all. Our skyscraper figures that if we do not set our hearts during "home leave" on going to a certain place we cannot be disappointed. Certainly it adds to the dramatic moment of each one's arrival in China. Every company woman knows the tense dramatic hour after the boat docks in Shanghai when her husband hurries off to that sounding-board of New York's tall building to learn their fate.

But this time the gods of business were a little less sphinx-like. My husband was getting up among the senior men in the field, and thus our futures were a little easier to predict. The place of our residence narrowed down to one of a dozen places. Even so, our skyscraper took the precaution of waiting until the very end of our stay in New York to tell us. Until the very close of those three months at home in America the scene of our next homesteading had been shrouded in mystery and thus shrouded seemed vague and unreal. Our past, trade frontier struggles, new efforts to come, all had gone down before the tense, crowded, luxurious days we were spending in New York. There was so much to see, to do. We were like the traditional sailor on shore leave. You see we were learning how to make those brief visits to our own country count for the most, take them running, so to speak, without thought for the morrow, abandon ourselves to the manifold delights of homecoming. We must dine at our favorite hotels and restaurants, we must eat all the things in season and out for

which our exile had made us crave, we must go the length of Fifth Avenue and Broadway and see what was in every shop window, we must buy, buy, we must go to plays, operas and symphony concerts—enough to last us for three years, we must telephone friends and see friends and talk to friends.

It was one day as we walked along Fifth Avenue just looking at the shop windows with their bewildering array of beautiful gowns, windows with new books, windows with shimmering glass and silver, windows with cut flowers that my husband said, "At the office this morning they told me that we were going to Changsha when we get back to China."

For a moment I actually felt dizzy with the sense of sudden movement. From the perspective of rich-as-Croesus New York, Changsha appeared like a pin-point objective into which the big oil business was hurling us, much as a skyrocket throws off sparks. When we were dropped over there, like the tiny light from the skyrocket we should be hidden, lost to this vibrant life of our own people now surging around us. To the rank and file of my countrymen Changsha, I knew, simply did not exist. Why, if we had turned and asked the people who were passing us about it, I doubted if any of them could have told us whether it was a city in mythology or a rich Indian prince. I was only too aware in that moment that it did not matter to them that the "City of the Long Sand" harbored an insistent, surging life of half a million

people or that it had a place in the trade of New York or even that a bit of their own America lay hidden in its depths. Business-absorbed, pleasure-going New York was a bright Medusa holding all itself enthralled. Only for us must its spell be broken.

From now on our days, although we crowded them even fuller than before with western amenities, seemed imminent with the coming three-year cycle of homesteading in this far-away province of China. At the opera, where the long, bare arms of the women in the boxes and balcony appeared to encircle us and shut us into soft perfume, ease, and perfection of sound, Hunan would enter clad in its clanging confusion of revolution, democracy, and monarchy. Into the sophisticated, urbane atmosphere of a Broadway play I saw the wild tribes of southern Hunan, the bandits of its countryside stalk. As I slipped into the big Fifth Avenue stores, through doors which, to me, seemed to swing on silken hinges, to answer the call of a thousand perfections of dress speaking powerfully to my woman's spirit, this island Main Street in the centre of Hunan where we were to homestead in the interests of America's trade would spread its straggling length before me.

Thus did my own country gradually become the dream and Hunan the reality. Against every lure of this bright Medusa of New York the new bit of homesteading would pit itself. Very wise was this skyscraper of ours which itself belonged to New

York. I had heard it said, and I now believed it, that it had worked out to a nicety just how long to leave us, its adventurers, under the power of our own land—just long enough to give us stimulus. Not long enough to paralyze us against our return to the frontiers of trade.

But it is only now that I am here that I realize how far that skyrocket of modern business hurled us. What a long way, indeed, is this island from New York! We reached it by way of a series of boats nicely tapered down as if to signify our distance from home, as a long road tapers away into the distance. February. Three weeks of it spent in a great Pacific steamer to Shanghai. March. We took a smaller steamer up the Yangtse to Hankow. Here we changed to a still smaller, less luxurious boat which took us to the Tung Ting Lake. Then as March is the time when the pagoda has only its feet in the low waters of the lake, we changed to a shallow draft launch owned by our company and sent down from Changsha to meet us. In it we came across the lake and up this branch river. When just in sight of our house the river grew even too shallow for that, we changed to a flat-bottomed "sampan," and so we came to this new home of ours.

But stay! I am going too fast. This was indeed a long journey! It was forty odd days since we had bidden goodbye to our tall skyscraper in Lower New York that, late in the afternoon, a week ago, as we

stood on the deck of the company launch, we came to the outposts of Changsha. On the right bank of the river, with the city but a faint haze in the distance, stood the tanks of the British oil company, and on the left a quarter of a mile farther on those of the American company we served. My husband could not hide his excitement as he looked through the glasses at the storage possibilities for this his new territory. To me, seeing them with the naked eye far off across the sand spit which in this low water season separated the river from the "installation," the spot appeared the very embodiment of our frontier existence, an isolated, fortified place held against attack. On ground built up high above the low-lying, surrounding rice-paddies, stood the tall, gray round tanks and slanting roofed "godowns" of our company, surrounded by a strong wall built on the top of an embankment. In front I saw a great pontoon used in the high water season, my husband told me, for a dock for the unloading oil tankers, but which now lay useless on the sand spit. Under the bridge connecting the sand spit with the gate of the compound, ran a tiny arm of the river. Like a moat and a draw-bridge these appeared, enhancing the effect of this fortress of business.

"Ah," said my husband, handing me the glasses and breaking into my dream with reality, "The Hunan officials didn't let us get hold of a very good shipping point."

Now in the distance on the left bank of the river we saw the bunding of the city itself—a wall of stone outlining the Long Sand. Opposite, we beheld the thin point of the island where we had been told the white man's town lay. Slowly our launch moved upon this thin point which finally resolved itself into a stretch of sand, a hut, and a few bare willows. With a little of foreboding I moved nearer my husband as I gazed at this spot, isolated and remote. All we had seen so far spoke of another experience in solitude.

Then Changsha, growing plainer to the left of us, claimed all our attention. We could now see plainly its bunding, a long perpendicular wall of noble gray-stone blocks rearing themselves from the Long Sand, with the low buildings of the city upon its top. Soon we discerned hastily discarded dumpings of the city's refuse, looking like barnyard dungheaps, buttressing this wall and obscuring its nobility. Slowly upstream moved the launch. The gray sprawling mass of the city on the top of the bunding wall took on the, to us, familiar details of a Chinese city—dark tile roofs, white windowless walls, and dark tunnel-like streets burrowing away into the city's heart. The refuse heaps became more frequent, the wall more obscured and now, here and there, like staccato notes in an otherwise even theme of gray and white, red brick and stucco foreign office buildings stood forth on a cleared space on the bund, stood forth from the

jumbled gray of the city behind. Between us and them close around us in the water stood another city, a city of junks. Down the lane-like waterways between them our launch wended its way. We sailed within the white shadow of one of the boats of our own marine of the Yangtse division. The foreign buildings on the bund, beyond the city of boats, beyond the river, had now taken on detail. We saw the Stars and Stripes floating over our consulate.

"Look!" cried my husband, "there's the office." Yes, there it stood, right next to our consulate on the bund, floating the blue and white company flag and looking for all the world like a modern bank building from some small Main Street of America. In dignified silence it faced us, while at its feet lay drying rows upon rows of fish. A tumble-down Chinese shanty hugged its gray stucco side, a Chinese watchman stood at the gate of its iron, picket fence. Oriental peddlars, beggars, and wayfarers moved ceaselessly before it. After the fashion of Saturday afternoon automobile traffic at home, man-propelled rickshas and sedan-chairs clanged or shouted their way through the crowd in front of it. A never-ending line of water carriers made black and slimy the stone steps down from the bunding to the muddy ribbon of water where we moved between the junks from which the bare masts stood up like Birnam woods come to Dunsinane. I looked again at the large plate glass windows of our oil company office which

calmly surveyed that scene. What would her sister buildings in America think of those man-propelled vehicles, the city's water system made of a line of human beings, or of the fish drying on the slimy street?

Straight ahead of us the flag of a British steamship company floated over a building of red brick. Only three stories it was, but incredibly tall it looked, so low was the city behind it. Far ahead of us on a little bit of jutting mainland the smokestacks of British and German antimony smelters stood in ragged disarray against the sky. Thus did our western life overshadow for us this old eastern city.

Now we looked to the right to find the island had taken on breadth, had lost its look of isolation. Trees rose in a tall mound over it, out of the Long Sand which encircled it the retaining walls of a dozen odd, foreign gardens reared their perpendicular sides. Eagerly we looked at them. Somewhere among them was our new home. Above the first garden the bare branches of many willows laced themselves against the gray February sky. Amidst them we could see the soft cream-colored walls of a stucco house.

"Laodah," I cried to the captain of our launch. "This belong us?"

"No, Missie, that b'long British consulate."

"Of course." In my excitement I had failed to notice the British flag floating from a tall flagpole in the garden. I sighed with regret, for the house challenged my imagination. Another appeared, white-

plastered; heavy wooden gates barred the entrance in its wall. "That b'long Commissioner Customs," came in laconic fashion from the Laodah.

Next three gray and gaunt houses faced us. They had no gardens. Long flights of steps led to them over their retaining walls. Their tiny grass plots stood even with these walls. I sighed with relief as our launch passed them. I had no wish to occupy them. A red brick, florid-looking house came next.

"Post office commissioner," again vouchsafed our Chinese captain. As we moved on, I looked back at its gate-house standing on the wall's top and the three gray gatehouses by the gray and gaunt houses. They looked like a row of grim sentry boxes.

"Look see," cried the Laodah. I turned sharply. "Missie house." There in the very middle of the island, set squarely east by west and north by south, with its back towards our advancing launch and the north wind was this seven times seventh home of ours. It nearly took my breath away when I saw how big it was and how very tall. Of gray brick trimmed in red, with a long two-storied servants' quarter jutting out from its back and a substantial wing (this wing where I now stand) jutting out from its side, with two-tiered wide verandas in the recesses between the house and this wing, and a portico in front, we beheld it with its many tall chimneys reaching up into the dim sky.

To the back of the island the sun shone faintly

through a rift in the even gray of the sky. Thrown into relief against that brilliance, black, cardboard-like hills, among them the tree-crowned sacred mountain of Yolosan, stood away on the mainland. Lofty, impersonal, Yolosan appeared, its very aloofness seeming to dwarf that still, tall house which was now the centre of life to me, the island that contained the struggles and emotions of this little white world we were to shape, and the thronging city of yellow men behind us in which my husband was to spend most of his time. Then our new home, claiming my attention once more, dwarfed in turn for me the city, the island, the mountain of Yolosan.

The long French windows of our house began to take shape. Like dark, unseeing eyes from under stony brows they stared at us. We have come so far for only this welcome, I thought. "Don't you think this home-to-be should give some hint of welcome, some sign of the compact to be entered into between us?" I asked my husband, perhaps a little wistfully. The bright Medusa, New York, still enthralled me a little. "It looks as uncompromising as a fort."

"A man's home is his citadel," murmured my husband, absentmindedly. And I knew his thoughts were still with that bank-like office building over in the gray city behind us.

The launch dropped anchor, and we embarked in a sampan over the last shallow bit of water. As we jiggled along, the house standing high above the Long

Sand, its grass embankment and its gray cement garden wall, filled our vision. My husband in that moment forgot the office building "Big, isn't it," he exclaimed, for the first time centering his attention on the house. "Suppose we christen it the Baronial Castle?"

"All right," I answered. "It's a fitting climax. Cave, Ragged Mantle, Baronial Castle."

Just then the sampan stuck on the sand still a few feet from the shore. Then we mounted the very shaky single plank jetty raised upon oil boxes, stones, and trestles. Indian file, holding hands, the sampan man ahead of me, my husband behind, we made our uncertain way to the firm sand. Along the ash path we went treading the last lap of our half-the-globe journey from New York to our frontier home. We began the ascent of the embankment steps. The iron gates in the gray wall opened. A blue-coated gateman stood there, his arms flung wide, holding back the iron halves to the gate. He was like some studied welcome in a play.

We entered.

The iron gates clanged to behind us. We walked a gravel path between pyramid evergreens. We stood silently under the house's portico. We only waited the opening of the door in front of us to enter into this third cycle of homesteading.



CHAPTER XII

I DISCOVER THE PERSONALITY OF THE COMPANY HOUSE

MY husband "took over" yesterday. The company house is now ours. As for the seven previous days, I stand this morning at the window in its wing, watching my husband's departure for his office across the river, looking far below me to the foot of the garden embankment where lies the Long Sand. As on those other mornings, I see my husband's receding figure walk the thin ash path which is flung like a whip-thong across the sand, see him reach the river, tread carefully the planks raised on trestles, all but disappear into the sampan, lose him in a jungle of junks, and catch a final glimpse of him as he boards the company launch.

And now with the sense of the sand binding me in I turn to my own part in this undertaking. The great moment of homemaking is upon me. Some half maternal joy takes possession of me. "Out of spirit and wind God created the earth for man's abiding place. A little akin to him, women create men's homes upon it," my heart sings.

But even as I turn, I am confronted with the worn and discarded chairs, tables and beds of a recently

vacated company house, all tagged with tiny but conspicuous brass number plates of the company. Without joy now I stand looking at them. I have never told even my husband of the fit of despondency which takes hold of me in this most exalted moment of each new bit of homesteading. I wonder if even he could understand how close the making of my home lies to me, that it is necessary obedience to the instinct which made primitive woman bring together branches for a rude shelter for those she begot. It is so hidden and deep an instinct I never entirely understand, myself, that first leap of my pulses to meet the task, that vague but poignant sensation of my arms going out to pull the walls in closer around us, to gather together as if they were sticks and stones, safety and warmth and peace, to create out of them home. No more do I understand the sudden surge of revolt which crowds out that gorgeous life-giving feeling as I look around and see my house already stamped by the impersonal god of business, and scarred with the battle of other people's lives. Here, this morning, as in all those other bits of homesteading I behold my materials thus marked. I was angry that the castor was off the bed, I rebelled at the happening, good or otherwise, which had taken a chip off the table and blurred and blotched the mirror. I hated these discarded dead things.

Then as I stood there with that fierce something deep within me wanting to do violence to these

discarded dead things, the company house—the first company house I had ever occupied, all the others had been makeshifts—filled me with a heretofore unexperienced feeling. I felt bound by some curious union to those untenanted rooms which were now mine—even to those used utensils of other people's activities. I perceived that each company family in their going had left some bit of themselves behind, and that out of these bits, layer by layer, like the making of a snow man, there was being built the super-personality of the company house. Bigger it was than any of us, better it was than any of us, worse it was than any of us, America's man of foreign trade. Each who had been here before had contributed to it his part and, whether we would or no, we should contribute ours. In this new mood I heard in the house's depths the steps of those others who had been here before me, heard them as a part of myself, perceived that both life and death had been woven into the house and that both were now in my keeping, were my inherited memories. Out of all the experiences already stamped upon this house, my home must rise. None might be discarded.

There was its builder, the first occupant. He it was who ten years ago after living for many months on the mainland next door to where the office now stands, in an ill-built Chinese house whose open windows let in the decaying odor of drying fish lying on the street outside, fashioned this house out of his

dreams. And they happened to be the dreams of a lord. This man, seeing neither the squalor nor the beauty of the East outside his windows, was wont to bury himself in the pomp and the grandeur of English lords and ladies whom he found between the yellow paper covers of his books. Out of these dreams of grandeur he built this house.

At that time, ten years ago, interior China was still virgin territory for our products. New York directors, even the Shanghai manager, rarely visited these mysterious interior points, so it was more or less "up to the men" to wrest what they could from this haphazard game of foreign trade. If you reaped as we had on the borders of Manchuria, a dirt floor in a warehouse that was all in the day's work. But if treaty trade agreements were such that land could be bought, as on this island, the far-away directors, in New York questioned little the expense. So this company man secured land and built, almost if not quite, to his heart's content. At that period neither his state nor ours occasioned much concern in the New York office.

He made himself this great house with this lookout chamber where I stand. He made himself a shelf-lined study behind, where those books which told about those lords, ladies, and castles were to be kept. In between he placed a white-tiled bathroom. This was luxury indeed for the East. But alas, his dream was too crowded. When the house was finished the



*It was my husband's work to inspect
these astute Chinese merchants.*

stairs to the servants' wing wandered like a clumsy wooden fire-escape across the window of the little study. These stairs and the two-storied servants' quarter shut out light and air from the inviolate retreat of the master of the house. So much for dreams. Along comes reality and snaps her fingers in their face. I open the door now and look into this study. I find it a dark little cubby-hole full of cobwebs and the débris of many departed families. Curtain poles and curtain rings seemingly *ad infinitum*, thread-bare and moth-eaten curtains, a broken doll's chair, a card table with a leg gone, empty bottles lying in dingy heaps, quite obliterate the dream.

But this ghost of a feudal lord seems to be protesting that I thus so quickly condemn him. He beckons me to follow him through two, three, five bedrooms, each with its white-tiled bathroom adjoining. Can this be the heart of China? I must needs go and look out of the glass doors of one of the bedrooms which gives on the upstairs veranda to verify my surroundings of primitive junks on the far-away line of the river, of the carrying coolies slowly, laboriously making their way across the Long Sand with loads slung at the ends of bamboo poles upon their shoulders, of the distant city where I have seen long lines of men carrying in the city's water and others carrying out its night-soil. Yes, not one of these things is lacking. I am still in China despite the white-tiled bathrooms which I behold with admiration.

The ghost is delighted to see how impressed I am. "Only wait until I show you the rest," he cries and leads me downstairs. I open a door. "This is my drawing-room," he announces. "Twenty feet by fifty I made it. Four French doors to look upon the garden, two windows look upon my tennis court, two more on a walled-in green plot at the back." I hope inwardly and fervently that the ghost has not the power to see the kind of houses I have occupied; the sugar-godown with its sweet, stale smell of sugar, the "cave" with its Chinese kitchen turned into a drawing-room, or even the "House of the Ragged Mantle" with its stovepipes protruding out of the windows. He might not deem me an adequate mistress of this mansion. Half to divert him from such knowledge, half because I am still shivering from my walk through the cold hall, I ask him sternly, "Why did you not heat your castle?"

"There are two large fireplaces in this drawing-room, one in every bedroom," he answers with dignity.

"To be sure, but nothing more?"

"Nothing more. I am an Englishman. We do not believe in central heat," he answers with dignity. That settles the question for him. We turn again to the grandeur. "I could divide this drawing-room in two, for private use, by those wonderful screens that reach the seventeen feet from floor to ceiling," he explains with pride. "Mahogany, intricately carved,

they folded back against the wall when I gave my dances to the six island families, (there were only that many then) and the business people that lived on the bund. A few liberal members of the missions in the city came also and occupied for the night my five large bedrooms.

"By the souls of my lords and ladies," he gasps, "My screens are gone! My beautiful carved screens," he moans, and vanishes.

Yes, his screens are not here. His time is up. Another personality is here to add his bit to the company house. But before I confront him, I step to a long French window to look at the garden. I love gardens. It is my turn to gasp in hurt disappointment, for had the ghost not promised me the beauty of an English garden, than which is none more beautiful, by building those four long doors which he said looked upon the garden? Indeed there was the wall surrounding the space as in correct English gardens but almost into the drawing-room looked utilitarian cabbages and Chinese beans! Down a path between straggled a clothesline! I am glad the ghost did not look out of the window before he vanished, but perhaps after all he did not care for gardens as much as for screens.

I find that the man who took over from the feudal lord had no dreams of grandeur. He and his wife did not come from a country of lords and ladies, but from my own middle west of frame houses, double parlors, and democracy. They built themselves

a wall to divide this English hall in two. It had sliding doors of pine nicely varnished. The carved screens stood discarded, patiently watched over by the servants, moved a little nearer their quarters each month until finally the right moment came. Between the going of one family and the coming of another the screens were forgotten and with other ill-got gain disappeared into the ever rapacious maw of servants' "squeeze."

But never mind that. With the new pine doors this company man and his wife could shut themselves in at night, make a cosy corner in this great towering house. They put an air-tight stove into the fireplace and the cold, high spaces of the room were heated. So did they overlay the grandeur of this house with their modest comfort. There was still, though, that long walk through the cold hall to the chambers above.

It is at this period that I discern that my house began to take on spirit, to vibrate to fundamentals. Simultaneously with the first wail of a man-child coming from that look-out chamber my house took unto itself spirit. New life had clamored at its doors and been admitted, young life which took this ceremonious house by the shoulders and pounded and pummeled its stateliness into activity.

It is at this time too that I divine that the house settled into greater harmony with its alien surroundings, for you must always remember that our houses

do not stand in the sunny land of America ruled over by one good and powerful god but a land brooded over by countless evil spirits which must continuously be propitiated. Now, as often before, I wonder how much of ourselves and our homes pass through the crucible of the East. How much has the white man's life of this house been changed by the daily beat of tom-toms, the noise and confusion of firecrackers, which just beyond its gates, are used to frighten away the evil spirits? And the ten servants within who stake all their faith on the efficacy of those tom-toms and firecrackers, how much do they change the elements of our western homelife? Surely as they have gone back and forth through this house, cleaning it, tending it, serving its occupants some bit of their alien selves, their joys and their fears must have become woven into the house's fibre.

So I rejoice that they too found contentment in the coming of this man-child. In their eyes his coming gave evidence that the house-god in some mysterious way had been propitiated even if he was never given a snuggling, warm nook over the kitchen stove in which to sit throughout the year, until with sealed lips, so as not to tell of the house's shortcomings, he is sent upon his heavenly way and another one is bought to take his place. Surely in the coming of this man-child my house has gained in strength against those evil spirits in which four hundred million people outside its portals and ten within believe.

Three years and his small fists and those of his small sister mold the house no more. "Master," "Missie," and small "Master" and "Missie" move on.

Now as I wander again from room to room I am conscious of a pretty, happy, laughing ghost who flits before me like the vagrant spring sunshine which heralded her coming. The young man who now "took over" brought his young bride to be mistress of this company house and stamp it with romance. On its altar they offered the incense of first love and bright hope. I smile with delight as I lay my hand on the banisters and climb the stairs. Have not children and lovers ascended these stairs ahead of me, these dark stairs winding upwards in the house's heart? As I put my hand upon the rail, I catch the passionate whispers of the lovers and the happy laughter of childhood.

And thus I come again to the threshold of the look-out chamber, the master's chamber. I hesitate. My joy fades. Someone with gray face and hands has entered before me and stilled the house's happiness. I feel the first shudder of pain pass through the company house. Ah me, I remember now that the memories of death as well as life I was to receive into my keeping.

Here from this chamber that bride of a happy year looked out over the river, watching for the company launch which should bring her man back to her from an up-country trip. On this first day of

her suffering she was busy assuring herself of his return. She would just stand here until she saw his boat, stand here and breathe the vibrant autumn air filled with the pungent smell of a thousand chrysanthemums, coming up from the garden. Yes, there was the reassuring familiar hum of the servants' voices from below. Surely everything was as it had been for a twelve-month and so of course it would continue to be. Her husband would come back to her in another moment just as he had so many times during this happy year. There on the bedpost hung his sweater. Life-like, dear, and familiar postures still clung about it in those folds at the elbow and the set of the collar. Surely he could not be far away. Indeed there was no gray stranger keeping him from her. She would look for him at the club, two doors away, where he so often played tennis. She would fetch him his sweater . . . the autumn twilight was coming . . . he would be cold . . . hadn't they told her he would be cold? With a shiver I see her turn and listen to the sombre tread of men upon the stairs. They were bringing him back to her dead.

In this company house built from dreams, touched with the mystery of birth and love, this company bride, its youngest mistress was having meted out to her one of the tragedies of frontier trade, the tragedy of her husband's sickness and death "up country." No memories of last ministrations were hers to heal the final parting. But she and my house

are spared the last dregs of the cup of sorrow for he had died in a mission hospital with a white woman's hands to tend him.

This is the company house, woven out of joy and sorrow, birth and death, and now bequeathed to me. This mantle, designed from other company people's memories, now descends upon me wrapping me about. For all the days of his three years' cycle of homesteading I, as latest mistress of this company house, will cherish it.

But wait, I see that a little more was done to its pattern before it was destined for me. Here come trooping the laughing, ironic ghosts of a bachelor's "mess," the last occupants before my coming. Once more I am guided down the stairs, this time to the dining-room, across from the one time great drawing-room where the fat figure of a Dutchman done in cheap porcelain stands upon the mantle. Cigars he is meant to hold. Above him on the wall hangs a pictured skull and cross-bones. These are bachelor possessions lightly acquired, lightly discarded in the moment of leave-taking. On the mantle's edge are little burnt grooves where men have laid down their cigarettes in order to fill their glasses. Twisting question marks the smoke makes while the bachelors drink to this bachelor's "home-leave." It is a farewell bachelor's party they are having for him. What matters it that both men and chairs are roughly handled? The chairs will still be able to do duty for

us around a somewhat worn dining-room table. A little scarred they are but still strong. Towards two o'clock out go the bachelors into the slumbering, island town of white men to follow the dim path on the Long Sand to the gates of their own gardens. In lock step they go.

Pace, pace.

Left, right; left, right.

People stir in their sleep in the island houses. One man reaches his gate, the chorus grows thinner. At last the voices dwindle to one with something a little incoherent about the white man's burden. Then except for the barking of the "wonks" all is silence on the island. The last house-boy has closed the last door behind the last white master and here in my dining-room the gray light of early morning discloses tables strewn with a wan array of empty glasses, mah-jongg tiles and poker chips.

And thus is the history of the house made complete until the day of our coming. Out of all these memories my home must rise, none may be discarded. And so at last I turn to my own homemaking as a "company" wife.



CHAPTER XIII

HERE COME SERVANTS

FROM one end of the house to the other, through the two drawing-rooms, up the dark, well-like stairs, into the five great bedrooms, through the servants' wing with the servants' rooms above and our kitchen, the Chinese kitchen, and laundry below, out into the garden, I go planning, discarding, creating. In my absorption I lose track of time. I only know that gray day follows gray day, as slowly I make this ten-year-old company house respond to the impress of our personalities. I belong to a house in the way that Isaac belonged to the soil in Hansen's "Growth of the Soil." I find rest only when its many activities go on around me. I like to have all the possible activities of home carried on within its four walls. I arrange with keen delight for a washman, a sewing amah, and gardeners, besides the regular servants of the house.

Also with much zest I approve and condemn the creations of those who came before me. I want the spaciousness which the "feudal lord" created. I regret the division of the long room and the loss of the beautiful screens, but I do not accept his formal conception of a drawing-room. Like the middle-west

occupants I want it to possess warmth and homeliness. But I object to the means by which they secured it. Immediately I remove the stoves from the fireplaces. I must have some Irish strain in me for the spirit of any house is not there until there is the flicker of fire on its hearth. So first of all we put the fireplaces alight. After office hours together my husband and I plan for the next winter—it is too late this year—a big stove in the hall with a drum upon its chimney so that the common passageway of all the house's life shall have taken from it its present cold tunnel-like quality.

We send for the carpenter and order bookcases for the larger wall spaces. These we get after much arguing as to price. Big houses in China and manager-ship of a division of a rich oil company bring their disadvantages. The native over-rates your monetary capacity. And—magnificent inspiration of all—my husband thought of turning the lookout chamber into our very own citadel of escape from the cares of office and community life. It became our private living-room. How altogether full of delightful possibilities is this “number one” company house! I still loved our Cinderella-like children, the “Cave,” the “Ragged Mantle,” and that other house on the hill in Antung built out of our heart's desire. But this stately sister of theirs was surely entering into our affections and truly her ways were more ordered.

As to the garden all things lay ready to my hand.

I had only to banish the cabbages to a little more secluded nook. The second night after we had taken possession, as I went to sleep, I saw my garden, a walled-in one, full of peace, beyond a green lawn. The compound walls made two of its sides. I should put ivy upon them. For the other two I should buy me arborvitæ trees and make me a hedge. I chose them because they had been in my childhood's garden in Illinois. Two pyramid ones shall make a gateway into the garden and from them a flagged path shall lead to . . . now I remember what as I drop off to sleep . . . three willows that stand close together like three sisters down near the end of the garden by the wall. I shall let them cross their branches above a bird's pool beneath. Another path shall lead to the iron gate at the back of the island that gives on the quiet back waters of the river and Yolosan, and those daffodils and hyacinths I had seen peeping through in the garden today shall make spring borders, and China has roses and peonies and. . . . I drop to sleep to dream of bulbs far down in the earth pushing upward through the dark.

As I wake next morning I ask, "Where do you suppose I can get a cow? I simply cannot go back to the much over-advertised tinned milk. I had enough for a lifetime in Manchuria."

"Better ask where can you get a man to milk your cow," answered my husband.

True, my wishes ran ahead of realities. No Chinese

in his right mind has ever entertained the idea of drinking milk. Cows are for work in the fields, nothing else, and it's like finding the proverbial needle in the haystack to find a Chinese whom some enterprising foreigner has taught to milk. As to the way in which he milks after you find that Chinese, that is a story for the funny papers.

From the delectable process of running hot water from his very own faucet for his shaving my husband propounds this conundrum, "Which would you rather do, live in China with plenty of chickens and eggs but no milk or fresh butter, or live in Mongolia with milk but no chickens or eggs?"

But I refuse to answer as I intend to have both. The boy would surely get me the cowman, as he had a gardener, an amah, and cook. Otherwise the garden must wait upon a gardener, the curtains for the long windows that give upon that garden upon an amah, and the cooking upon a cook, and so on ad infinitum, for in China no man can do anything for himself, unattended. He would lose face too much. One may plan and one may even execute, even stoop to such labor as cooking if there is a celestial at hand to hand you the rolling pin, spoon, dish. Even the cook himself has such a satellite. "Imagine! cry my sisters in America, a whole servants' wing and special servants to fulfill every function of your house. This is paradise!" Surely it compensates for the continuous moving, for the ready-made house. True, but even Eden

had its serpent and that day did the serpent appear in mine!

This city of the Long Sand you must remember is in the very midst of Hunan and the Hunanese is a curious compound of pride, sloth and quick temper. He is like the southern darkie who works only long enough to accumulate a little money and then casts the dust of labor from his feet, but he is also like the proverbial Italian with the stiletto on his hip. He is proud, too proud to stand interference. So the Hunanese is not supposed to make a good servant. Thus it came about that while we were in Shanghai, on our way here, someone advised me to take with us, at least the head servant, the boy. But there was a flaw in this scheme, someone else pointed out. This proud race of Hunanese brook no interference. They were quite capable of boycotting such an imported individual. It was a favorite pastime of theirs—the boycott. Lesser servants might refuse to work for him, the shopkeepers might refuse to sell to him. Yes, you were told, the servants on the island were a kind of close corporation and the *doyen* of their number owned the only foreign meat market from which he supplied you with

“Domestic goose, chicken, duck and wilderness
Fresh vegetable and best season fruit.”

Truly it would hardly pay to offend such an august personage.

Certainly you could not go yourself to buy your chickens and vegetables at the early morning market, across the river, in the city down one of its dark and slimy streets. Even the hardiest among us would find his appetite curiously lessened by the memory of that ill-smelling street, its stones covered with a two-inch coating of slime made by the drip from the pails of the water-coolies and the dirt from numberless tramping feet, and its little cave-like shops with wooden tubs in which float eel and other twisting slimy waterfoods and baskets piled high with old green eggs. Even the neat tea shops, and enticing fruit stalls with their trays of mandarin oranges, yellow limes, and bright red persimmons could not entirely offset the slime, the eels and the eggs. But even if you were so hardy as to venture into this, how could you cope with all the tricks of wily market-men? Could you tell that a chicken had been given a forced feeding of clay to bring up its weight and might die on the way home, or that oranges had been given a tiny and, to your inexperienced eye, invisible hole into which water was inserted to give juice and weight to an old orange? No, having had between us twenty years' experience in China we did not for a moment see ourselves attempting the impossible. Better take the lesser evil and have native-born Hunanese or ones who had been in Hunan so long that they had made a place for themselves.

And then on the very last morning of our stay in

Shanghai we had weakened! There had appeared at our hotel a boy with "number one" recommendations who, in that miraculous way known only to a Chinese house-boy who needs a job, had taken unto himself all our difficulties. He had finished our packing, tipped the coolies, seen the baggage on the steamer, and all without a sign of hurry or commotion. And then, oh weak and credulous human beings that we are, we hired him when he swore that he had lived in Hunan before. And for these first few weeks everything had been perfect, which proved, we had said to each other, that the tales told in Shanghai were exaggerated.

The departing master had taken his boy with him so there had been no apparent contestant for our Shanghai boy's throne and with the finesse of a born ruler he had managed the others, at least it appeared so, for the gardener of ten years' standing had stayed on, so had the washman. For the first few days the boy, who like all "number one" Chinese boys can in an emergency be all things to all white masters, had cooked for us. At the end of that time without fuss he had installed a cook, and only the evening before he had escorted to the drawing-room a dainty little Chinese amah swaying on her lily feet who declared she was a "sew, sew amah" with which she combined the arts of the lady's maid. Was it any wonder I had grown enthusiastic over the Hunanese? I had found them a very engaging people,

a childlike and gentle people who smiled at you. And so as I went down the stairs that morning I determined right after breakfast to take up the question of a cowman.

Alas for my sanguine spirit. Let no woman in China sink into peace. It all began that morning when I went to interview the cook about the menu for the day. With great reticence and still deeper regret it was that he enlightened "missie" that the boy was a very bad man. "Indeed," I answered and offered him no encouragement to proceed with his revelations. But no lack of interest on my part could stem the tide of his confidences.

It is only for missie's sake he speaks, he continued, he and the boy "b'long number one friend," but his loyalty to me was great, he must always think of "missie" first. So very reluctantly, oh yes, very reluctantly it was that he told "missie" that—oh terrible crime—the boy had come to Changsha to smuggle opium!

Oh wily one! There was no ignoring this. The cook knew that no white man could afford to keep a servant over whom there hung the slightest suspicion of such smuggling. It had in the last few years become a very possible as well as profitable business to smuggle opium out of Hunan. Junkmen, soldiers, yes, even officials did it. But it was against the law of the country, and no respectable white man would appear to connive in such nefarious traffic. Of course,

it was quite possible that the cook himself dealt in this same commodity. More than one white-man's servant used the security of his position for that purpose. But I knew quite as well that no Chinese ever gives his friends away no matter how great the offense. The *esprit de corps* in household servants is impregnable unless there is an enemy in the camp. I now believed what they told us in Shanghai.

Thus it was that I went more soberly about my duties that morning, knowing that a storm was gathering around me. I had not long to wait. As I made my rounds, gardener, gateman, house-coolie, sampan-coolie, wash-coolie, and amah, all told me with the utmost reluctance and secrecy of this heinous crime of the boy. It was beside the point to suggest that he who was innocent should throw the first stone of suspicion. They knew that I knew that they had hit upon a scheme which made the boy's departure inevitable.

On the surface all was as usual, the boy appeared as before to be ruler, the coolies served him obsequiously; but both the boy and we knew where the end of the day would lead. This was work for the master. Nothing so serious could be handled by "missie" so after tea in the still unsettled drawing-room my husband told the boy he would have to go. He protested, he denied, he told in long bursts of Chinese which I could not understand of his unselfish loyalty to his very fine "missie" and "master" and

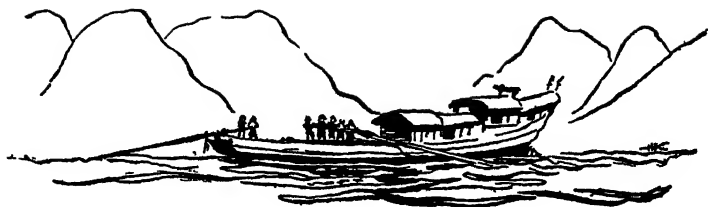
then he went out and packed. He knew, as did we, that his throne had collapsed.

Then it was that my husband and I surveyed each other ruefully. This was only the beginning. But things must take their course. At any rate we declared a truce for the evening. But "settling in" had lost for me a bit of its zest. There is so much to do I think mournfully and new servants must be broken in. All this fuss over opium is only their way of telling me they do not intend to work under that foreign boy. But on the other hand I cannot be dictated to by my servants. That is quite as important a point in this household drama as dismissing the boy. The next morning, outdoing suavity with suavity, I pay them all their wages telling them that knowing the Chinese custom that each boy shall call his own helpers, I, of course, will not be inconsiderate enough to ask them to remain under a new boy. It is with deep regret that I part with them and I only hope that the new ones will be as considerate of my "face" as they have been. Oh, land of innuendoes and evasions! We each know what the other means. And that night a sadder and a wiser people we go to bed with an empty servant's wing. A coolie brought over from the office keeps watch at the gate. We shall content ourselves with Hunanese servants hereafter.

Ten o'clock the next morning a boy appears. His recommendations are good. Whether he has borrowed them for the occasion is another matter, I think some-

what cynically. My faith in the Hunanese is a little disturbed. However, there is nothing to do but to try him. When I do so he produces a friend from just outside my garden wall. "A number one cook" he solemnly assures me. Cooks and boys usually travel in pairs. By dinner time my force is again complete down to another lily-footed amah who "saves all things missie may wish." Where did they all come from? From the drab little huts, from the half-fed of China's millions. Now I shall learn the weakness and the strength of the Hunanese. I am indeed in their hands!





CHAPTER XIV

HERE COMES THE TOWN

AMID these highly individual problems I felt something which I have not felt for a very long time. I was about to emerge from the solitary work of a pioneer breaking the first rough soil of international trade as our ancestors had broken the first sods of the prairies. I was about to emerge from the intensely individual existence of the frontier province of Manchuria and the sickness-enforced solitude of Hangchow into community life. We were to be molded by the human element of the company, the company people. I had had a hint of this in the response of my being to the house's memories. But those were but memories. I was now to feel the insistent calls upon my attention of company people whose lives would be intricately interwoven with mine, and I was to enter into society and become a member of a town! Not a "homeside" town to be sure, but one of our tiny Main Streets in China.

Not since that first year of our marriage when Newchwang molded and pummeled into me its rigo-

rous white-man-in-the-East social standards, have I been a member of any community. Since the first year in Newchwang I have known only the isolated homesteading, the-where-two-or-three-are-gathered-together feeling of white men in the East. Now more and more persistently each day I felt the community spirit creeping over the rim of my consciousness. I was not a part of it as yet. We had not made our debut, had not been called upon. And yet I felt myself played upon by the peculiar atmosphere of this island group of white men. Like some all-permeating substance it was making its way through my compound walls, through the walls of my house. I felt it moving along under me, carrying me in its current.

Daily now as from my lookout window I watched my husband's receding figure walking the thin ash path which flung itself like a whip thong across the Long Sand, I had found myself watching other dark figures treading other dark whip thongs which lead from the other island houses. At five in the afternoon I have learned to look for the dispatch launches of all the business houses of Changsha, coming back to the little jetties. Far off on the streak of the river I watch to see whether British, American, or Chinese flag floats from the stern and which Company's emblem from the prow, faint bits of color seen from this window. And I listen to hear the horn of each launch summoning its own sampan. Even if I sit by the fire the sound of the horns penetrates the walls



*WHEN I looked at my quiet garden it struck
me as fantastic to be talking of bandits.*

of my house, announcing which Company launch has anchored and whose husband is getting home for tea.

Each day, a little later, I have seen the island people in twos and threes move across the sand, along the ash paths en route to the club two doors away from us. Seven o'clock, lanterns like fireflies flicker on the paths across the sand, on the path under the lea of our garden wall. Suddenly they disappear. Coming in from a walk each evening, we see they have all come to rest in a little crowd at the servants' entrance of the club—house-coolies and lanterns waiting to take their "masters" and "missies" home.

Seven, eight, briskly the lanterns again flicker on the paths. Here in our lookout chamber echoes the shout "what so, what so," "sampan, sampan," the rancorous honk of the klaxons, the penetrating note of the air-whistles of the different company launches. The island people going home to dress. Another half hour, again lanterns, horns, and sampan calls. The island people going out to dinner.

Sometime far in the night, I stir in my sleep, roused by the flicker of light on my ceiling, by that shout of "what so, what so" and that always disturbing summons of the launch horns. The radium hands on my traveling clock say one, two o'clock, sometimes three. The little community to which I am soon to belong is going home at last. It fills me with a curious excitement to picture them out there on the little, wobbly, improvised jetties—the lanterns throwing

yellow bits of light over the hems of the frail and pretty evening dresses of the women, up over faces framed by the tightly fastened fur collars of their coats and over the white expanse of the men's evening shirts as they help their wives into the sampans, up again on to the launches. Faintly at last from the extremes of the island the horns call again. From launch to sampan, to jetty, to the ash paths, to their houses I see in imagination those carefully dressed people go. London and Washington going home from their gaieties cannot outdo my community.

My community? My tiny town? I feel deeply stirred. Vivid flashes of homesteading in Manchuria, of the long, silent, waiting months in Hangchow pass in review through my mind. I do not know whether I remember them or am dreaming of them. I hesitate a moment on the threshold of this new, old life. The unbroken companionship with my husband is to feel the touch of other personalities. In this moment I relinquish my isolation. It is a curious coming back into the world. Other men and women in the East know this moment, mixture of longing, reluctance, and excitement.

"What so, what so." Two communities speak to me in the call. The cosmopolitan community which had just been ushered home to bed by those patient coolies with their lanterns and, set within it, another community, more important to me, the oil company people. "What so, what so?" My husband is their

leader. Of the white staff there are six besides ourselves; a man and his wife in a house a few doors down the island, a man and his wife far down the river at that fortress-looking "installation" and two young bachelors in an apartment over the office. In three years we shall watch them all go and others come in their places, see them fail, see them succeed, and each experience of theirs will play its part in our experiences. What will they do to us? What shall we do to them? This is the twentieth century corporation life in its foreign trade compartment. We its members are almost as interdependent as the members of a patriarchal household, the old-world, fourteenth-century life which flourishes among our Chinese neighbors.

* * * * *

But I was not to watch my community and dream about it! The island people wanted to pass judgment upon us. Had not each member of this town looked upon the same two dozen faces for five months?

Five months ago nature drew a cordon of shallow water around this tiny town forcing it in upon itself, inbreeding its social activities. For all these months no steamers have come to dock at the British and Japanese wharfs across the river. Through the winter the only communication with the outside world has been the Hankow-Canton railway which starts near Hankow and ends in a kind of blind alley just below

this city of Changsha, three hundred and sixty miles from its destination. It is a squeeze-ridden and hence decrepit line, over which the trains crawl more slowly and precariously each year. Last year they made the journey from Hankow to Changsha in twelve hours, now they take twenty-four very unsafe hours. Only in cases of necessity during Changsha's "closed season," October to April, do the members of this island come or go.

Arriving as we had towards the end of this season, we were of vast importance. You can see a great deal depends upon every single member of these tiny towns and perhaps a little extra depended upon us. Did we not live in this big house right in the middle of the island and did not those two large drawing-rooms of ours make one of the best places to dance in the town? In fact, they all knew it had been designed for this by our English predecessor. And then there was that hard-glazed tennis court which our bachelor predecessor had brought to perfection. Much hangs upon our personalities and our hospitalities. What was going to be our contribution? What were we like? What did we do? Were we gay? Were we hospitable? Who had known us in another port? Were we known as trouble makers? Were we among the peaceful? Worst of all, could it be that we were that much deplored product, people who loved their own fireside and books? Bless me, what a catastrophe that would be! "Cabbages" was the awful in-

nuendo whispered around this island town for such as these.

Already we had served a little part in the community. Had we not been eagerly discussed now for fourteen nights and afternoons? Had we not stimulated the dinner conversation with all these questions asked and answered in contradictory ways? The doves of the island were indeed a-flutter.

* * * * *

Today the port came. It was not without considerable trepidation that at four this afternoon I heard the great iron gates grind on their hinges. "Eight years has made a difference," I had time to muse as I watched my cloud of witnesses come up the path between the pyramid evergreens. I was not the inexperienced bride who had stood in the little drawing-room in Newchwang those sunny August days eight years ago, trembling under the gaze of the "typans'" wives. Both America and myself were a little more drilled in this international game. Nevertheless, I wished that it was not an hour before my husband's sustaining presence would be in that room. That was all the time I had for trepidation or meditation. London and Paris and Washington were walking up my path, stepping within the portals of my house, coming into my drawing-room! I stood up bravely there by the long windows to offer myself as the spectacle for this Roman holiday.

The representative of his Britannic Majesty the King came in with his wife. The American Consul came in with his wife. A very dapper Frenchman from the Post Office came in with his wife. The Captain of the American gunboat, "The Villalobos," stationed each year in Changsha for the "closed season," came in with his wife. London and Washington could not outdo us in the understanding of position and power. Each in that room knew and held his rank. But half disguised under the urbanities of tea, safe conversation and the perfume of English violets from the garden I felt the jealousies of nations and the strivings of individuals for social power on this white man's island. There was the position of the oldest resident to be considered, the position of the senior consul, and the distinction between the professions and mere business. It was very exciting this getting them all placed, so much so that I forgot for a moment they had come to judge us, but I was not to be spared.

"Now," said the representative of His Britannic Majesty the King, placing himself before me, "tell us what you like to do. Bridge? Mah Jongg? Poker? Prefer books? Well they are very good in their way. But there's your duty to the community. A little diversion you know is necessary," he continues. "I myself do not approve of this continual going. I believe in a night at home now and then. Moderation in all things. But certainly you will

give us at least five evenings of the week. Only on rare occasions in the autumn and spring when someone is leaving the port and at Christmas and on the King's birthday shall we ask more of you."

"The hour for the parties to close? There I'm conservative too," he continues. "Not later than two," he says firmly.

"I like the week-ends for parties," I murmur a little faint-heartedly, hearing like a whispered sigh that awful innuendo "cabbages" pass like a breath through the room as my investigator exclaims, "Now that's a pity!" But not unkindly he promises that they will make the best of us. He has learned what he came for and from now on his face is set towards the door as he talks with those along his triumphal way.

And still they keep coming. But among them I see my husband. I stand up more bravely. Representatives of other little towns have come over with him on his dispatch launch. Some from the Presbyterian town from over in the city, wholly American, and some from "Yale-in-China" town from beyond the gate of the city and one white-bearded, Isaiah-like man from the Church of England's two-family town. I feel held under the spell of the fanatical eyes of this Isaiah-like man and the Lorelei quality of his cultivated Oxford voice.

"I have lived in this city for forty years," he tells me with an accent which sounds as if he had just stepped from Oxford's cloisters. "And I tell you,"

he adds in the tones of a prophet, "this new leader among the Hunanese is in league with the devil."

"I'll say he is," speaks from behind me a voice with familiar western breeziness, and I turn and see one of the bachelors of our own company. I step from this conversation and survey with delight the crossing of swords over the politics of Hunan by the prophet from Oxford and this unconventional son of a state university.

The oldest resident of the island enters. It gives him much prestige. He has lived here all of five years! Truly make way for the great! But under the dignity did I not see a bit of the Peck's bad boy spirit peeping? Well perhaps not, perhaps I imagined it.

The representative of the Customs enters carefully avoiding the oldest resident. They had had a black quarrel at the club over dogs! A few of the thoughtful step between them to preserve international amenities.

Bits of conversation drift to me as I pass from group to group. "When will the British gunboat be in? There is a little raillery over the American gunboat, an ancient affair taken over from the Spanish in the Spanish-American war. Too deep in draft to move during Changsha's "closed season" it sits in the deepest pool of water within the harbor limits. No amount of danger or anti-foreign demonstration could move it. "Did your Congress vote a new Yangtse flotilla?" I hear someone ask my husband.

"No it was turned down again," he answers sturdily, unmoved by the raillery. He is very loyal to his country's politics I notice with a glow of pride. Odd though, I think to myself, that our country is not more aware of this frontier trade of hers, when it was out of the lure of the "China trade" that America was discovered, settled, and made prosperous. Odd, now that that dream has come true in the new trade route to the East, the Panama Canal, that our country should succor so little this healthy child—our Eastern trade.

And surely she is a healthy, growing child! I looked around the room and, although the preponderance of influence was British, there was an unmistakable something quite American, too, which had been lacking eight years before. Now we do indeed tinge the life of His Britannic Majesty the King's subjects in China with the spirit of Main Street. Still, on the two Sundays when I had looked out over the island and seen the national emblems in place of the company emblems of week days, there had been but two American flags among many British.

* * * * *

The last caller has come and gone. My husband has gone to the club with the other men. I have fled from the débris of teacups and cocktail glasses, leaving the servants to clear it away, fled to the refuge of the lookout room. I look again at that band of

sand outside, which binds all of us together. I have been watching the brave outward show of the island. But I know things beneath the surface, the life of the other houses. Who does not? In China no white man's life is his own. Now in this quiet I feel the impress of these other women's lives who share this island with me.

Down the island, in the drawing-room of the commissioner's house, his wife walks up and down. Every public appearance is a humiliation to her. Should not hers still be the dignity of having been lady in waiting to the queen? She glances around the room at the pictures of the royal family on the tables and piano to verify her past glory. How bitter was now her humiliation. A woman who was but a commoner ranked above her in this island community. Yes, the glory of those days with royalty had come to an end. She had stepped out of that glory with her head held high into this exile. She had heaven to thank for that. No one in that other world had seen her humiliation. It was hidden in this far-away island where these ribbons of sand bound her round and round.

In the house of His Britannic Majesty the King's representative another woman paces her drawing-room. What an afternoon to remember—as was every social event. A lady in waiting to the queen waited upon her going. What a wonderful place the island was! It was the centre of the world for her, the centre of a glorious world of power—this island—

this island two miles long and two hundred yards across. And the sand binds her in also.

In a low rambling house on the other side of mine sits another woman writing "home letters." This is the day and hour she keeps for it. It is her children's former bedtime hour, and she tries eagerly, hopelessly to make so vivid her written words that their facile baby minds will feel the impress of her presence when, a month later, in England, they read those letters. To be with her children, to be with her husband, her heart pulling two ways at once, that is the woman's portion on this frontier of her nation's trade. The sands bind her in also.

At the very upper point of the island there is another colony. You could live in the port a year and scarcely realize that it existed. It's the German community. The trees have hung their branches so low that we cannot see the white houses with their blue shutters. Even yet the old pain of the war, the ache of each nation for her lost youth holds us apart. Hate dies hard in these tiny hotbeds of national pride. Are there women sitting in those houses waiting for their husbands to return from the German club, dreaming of their children, wearing seven-league boots of ambition on a two by four island? The sand binds them in also.

Little isthmuses of still another civilization wedge themselves in between our big houses—little spurs of Chinese huts. In our big houses are lights, comfort,

luxury; in the huts, peanut oil lights or three-cent kerosene lamps throwing deep shadows among the dusty rafters. In the people's minds are deep shadows too, superstitious fears of the wind and water that surround them.

Houses, houses of half the nations of the earth, and within, women with their men pouring their lives into the crucible of foreign trade. And the sand binds us all together.



CHAPTER XV

THE WORLD APPEARS

FOR the forty days we have been here the sun has not shone. The island, the long sand, the thinning ribbon of water, the gray city, all have lain under the gray pall of this soft Oriental rain, a rain that wraps things about like a death shroud. It has absorbed my vitality, my endeavor, my will, this rain dripping slowly, monotonously into the eves, into the drainpipes of my house. I feel the red blood with which I came back from America turn to water in this softly insidious atmosphere filled with the unrelenting, fine rain. With a fatalist's foreboding I know our energies are being sucked down with the rain, into the earth, to help her create the excessive green of southern China, the green of the rice, the

green of the bamboo, the green of the mulberry. Ruthlessly with the rain she sucks at our energy to create her own glory. Limp and lifeless, I feel now I shall live all my life shut in by the sands, with the drip of the rain in the eaves, in the rainpipes.

Then today came the gorgeous sun bursting through the mist and out of the forty days' saturation came spring! Far away at the edge of the river I saw a black line of newly wet sand. All through the day that fluted, black edge crawled steadily toward me. Sampan coolies waded ankle-deep, moving the jetties island-ward. At noon they were wading knee-deep placing the jetties above the rising water. The band of sand has shortened two hundred feet! All through the afternoon I watch the river like a shining mass of quicksilver crawl steadily landward. No one at the club this afternoon talked of anything else. It was enough that the river was rising and that the winter's isolation was over.

Night! For the whole of it we hear the shouts of the coolies working in the rising waters, moving the jetties, rescuing the planks and the trestles from floating down stream. The hum of a small town rises to us as we lie in our beds; the cries of babies, the fretful and happy crooning of women's voices, the guttural commands of men, the rattling of anchor chains, the scraping of anchors. The river has floated within ear shot a city of junks. The night vibrates to creation. And suddenly, mysteriously I am de-

livered from that dreadful inertia, filled blessedly with energy.

Morning The Long Sand has gone! The river stands high up on the bunding wall of the city. It has buried the refuse heaps. It flows swiftly along by the bottom step of our garden embankment.

Together, before breakfast, we hasten to the back gate of our compound. Before our very eyes the last sands disappear. This year the river is in dramatic mood. As we stand there its water sweeps down from the top of the island. The momentum of its rush down river carries it in a great sweep around the lower point of the island. The two arms flow together like the Red Sea after the crossing of the Israelites, sweeping away the last of the Long Sand as we stand there. The river, bringing the world, is at our gates and the gates of the city!

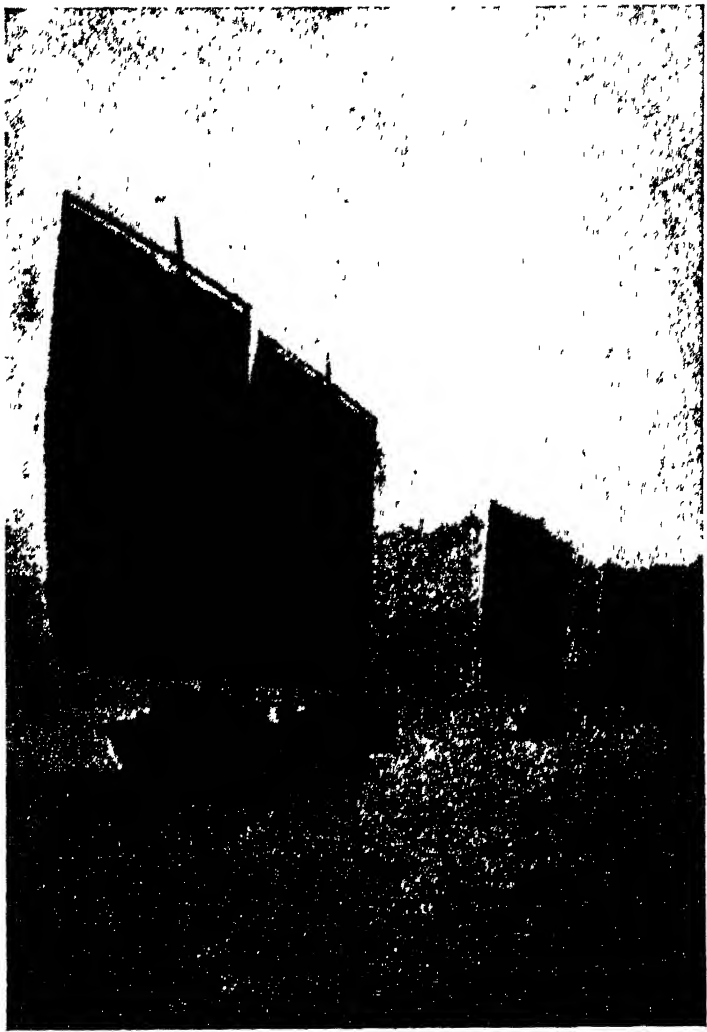
Do you understand? We have stepped from our winter's isolation into a place in the sun. This river which touches the steps of my garden embankment belongs to the great trade routes of the world. It flows into the Tung Ting Lake, the lake flows into the Yangtse, the Yangtse flows to the sea, the sea reaches out to the world, carrying the products of two hundred million people of the Yangtse Valley!

I can stand now in my lookout room and look down on this trade of the world slipping by under the branches of my willows, on the river washing the steps of my garden embankment. If I should lean

out of my window it seems I could all but grasp the tops of the tall masts of the junks going by, propelled by their sails and long poles which half-naked brown men stick into my garden embankment. Under the rounded matting tops of the holds are calicoes from English mills, boxes full of cigarettes from Virginia, bales of cotton from Georgia. Farther out on the river I can see a little launch go bustling by, towing a long line of flat lighters loaded with American copper. And there comes the gray form of one of our own launches headed up river with a string of native junks behind packed full of tins of oil.

And going down river, rafts a hundred feet long, great clumsy whales of wood, many logs deep hidden under the water, a menace to the other river craft, move between the great salt junks, the whaleback junks, the sampans starting out loaded with rice, with opium, with firecrackers, with linen, with zinc, with lead, with antimony. The trade of the world on the river at my gate, below my window, America, England giving, China receiving; China giving, America, England receiving.

That was on Monday and this is Thursday and the first steamer lies moored to the British wharf across the river. From my window I can see its great vermilion and black smokestack, with the red brick building of the office towering above it on the bund. I join my husband at the office, and we go down river to the "Installation" to see the first big



*AN age the steamer has forgotten—an age of
man-propelled junks.*

oil-tanker of the season come in. The great gray hulk of "The Beautiful and Trustworthy" pulls alongside our wharf. In the very moment of anchoring, the huge rubber pipes lying ready on the pontoon are attached and the pumping begins. Not a moment to waste. The race with the autumn drop in the river has begun. Those rapacious, tall tanks must be filled so that the lamps clear to the borders of Hunan may be filled.

That was Thursday. This is Saturday. The river has gone in the night as it came. For native and white man alike everything hangs upon the Yangtse. The rise in this river was a kind of flash in the pan. The Yangtse has not yet risen and the waters of our river emptied themselves quickly into the all but empty Tung Ting Lake, which in turn emptied them into the Yangtse.

The river has gone, leaving us again to the Long Sand, now a wet dark mass. The river has gone, carrying with it the great junks, the cargo steamers, the oil-tankers. Only the small junks, the sampans, the company launches remain. The big steamers hurried away on the dropping water. As soon as he is dressed, my husband takes his spyglasses and walks out over the sand where the water stood but yesterday to see whether the "Beautiful and Trustworthy" got away in time. He could not see her. Undoubtedly she, too, had slipped out on the falling waters. I was learning bit by bit that all our days in Hunan

were to be shaped and colored by the moods of the Yangtse which our river obeyed.

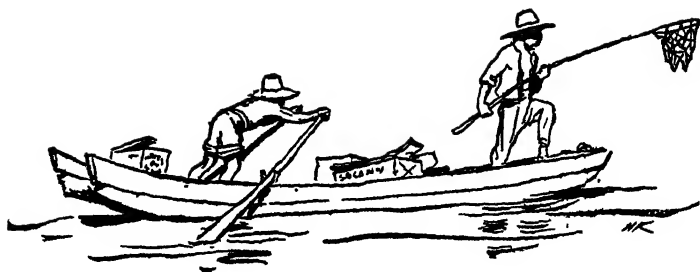
All the life of the provinces which the Yangtse drains hangs on the whims of that river. Food, work, life rest with the Yangtse, nature uncontrolled except by the most inadequate and simple dikes carries the water where she will, in summer burying crops and houses in its depths and in winter shrinking away to nothing, refusing to carry the cargoes of man's desire.

My husband is no mere onlooker at this one-handed struggle against nature. He, and so I his wife, live by the whims of the Yangtse. Oil for the lamps of Hunan is writ large across our consciousness as we watch the river at the gates come and go. Each rise and fall is accentuated for us, gaged as it is, not by a junk as the natives gage them but by the weight and depth of steamers. The company is pitting the twentieth century of the steamer against an age the steamer has forgotten, an age of uncontrolled nature, of undredged, flimsily diked rivers. A dangerous and dramatic thing to put the things of one age into an old worn-out age.

Four, possibly five, months lie ahead of us during which the thousands of units of oil must be sent to the great tanks all up and down the Yangtse which are thirsting to be filled. And the cavernous yawning godowns—how many shiploads they take! There is not a moment to waste. The closed months of the year loom large before every company man

when shipping to this and that place is closed, when only the slow toil up river by junk remains.

In late April the river again rises. Can my husband depend upon it this time? Is there time to wire for a shipment? Can the tanker safely reach our port, unload, and get out before another drop in the river leaves her high and dry in some paddy field? A tanker must never be sacrificed, neither must a shipment of oil. The tanks down at the "Installation" loom large and thirsting.



CHAPTER XVI

AND THE COMPANY

“TEA, boy.”

I had pressed my electric bell and achieved results. My new celestial had come to answer my new bell.

“Can see master’s boat leave other shore,” I said, “wanchee everything ready, master come this side.”

I watched with excitement to see whether these events would coincide. I was testing the final arrangements of my castle.

It was in March when I had walked within its portals and looked out upon the band of sand. To-day it is May. The sand is gone. The steamers now come three times a week. The island is a thin green emerald set in the platinum gray of the river. My tall house is half hidden in this green of willows and plane trees. The joy within me is so great that it seems to rise in my throat with almost the poignant, choking sensation of grief. My feet feel like dancing feet. I am in harmony with my woman’s mantle—my home.

This was not quickly attained this time. I stop to ponder. Were houses like friendships? Did each year's deepening reserves of spirit make harmonious union with new houses more difficult for me? This must not be. My love of home must not crystallize into love of any one spot or any one home. I must always keep the plastic spirit of the pioneer in order that I may belong with honor to my husband's adventure on these frontiers of American trade.

But my joy refused to be thoughtful today. I dismissed the problem. This slow adjustment was not due to me. It was simply due to the fact that this stately house had had its own reserves of spirit which after the comradeship of the house of the "Ragged Mantle" had at first made me reticent also. But now it was spring-time and tea-time, the most expansive hour of the day, I and the house were one. I walk to and fro on my dancing feet, back and forth across the two large drawing-rooms. Every beloved household treasure and household god now fitted its own individual nook as if it had stood there for a lifetime, and the orphan-like furniture of the company was a Cinderella placed well in the background.

I smiled happily to myself, remembering the breathless and despairing moments we had had. There was the afternoon when we had unpacked the Korean chests we had bought long ago on a sunny day in Seoul and which had graced the "Cave," the "House

of our Heart's Desire," and the "House of the Ragged Mantle." With a sense of excitement I always unpack these chests with their quaint doors and brass butterfly hinges. About them seem to cling the mysterious and excited feelings of the little Korean bride who had once placed all her pretty pale pink and green gowns and her soft white pantaloons within them, had them slung against the fat sides of a diminutive pony, and been perched on top herself when bride and boxes had been whisked away to their new home with all the flutterings and heartbeatings attendant upon unknown husbands and homes. Had she been happy? Had her husband found her beautiful? The chests told no secrets but they had always fitted most happily into our wanderings, into "The Cave" for instance and the "House of the Ragged Mantle."

But what was my consternation when, within the walls of this castle, they shrank into insignificance. They were very evidently not at home. But things as well as people must adapt themselves in the adventure of trade. It was my husband's idea. "Why not stand them on top of each other?" To be sure. Thus placed they supported and enhanced each other and became as dignified as the house. Now I behold with satisfaction their dignity as they stand there between the two French windows. Long panels of sun, longer than the French windows, reach across the room touching the cold tea in a tall, glass pitcher, which the boy has just brought in, making it glow like amber.

Two spoons with colored glass bowls lie like two bits of turquoise on the tray. A tall bisque-colored camel, meant to attend some Chinese gentlemen in the shadowy land beyond the Chinese Styx, from his place on an old Chinese chest looks straight into the sun, conjuring up before me leagues of dusty trails. I have traveled in carts, in boats, in chairs. But the camel and his trails tempt me no whit today. Neither spring nor the camel have any wanderlust power over me this day. I move the pitcher to hear the tinkle of ice against the glass. When before have I heard such a sound in China? Yes, after eight years of hit-and-miss houses and scraps of ice gathered from fishing boats and full of the bugaboo of germs, an ice-plant and a castle full of creature comforts are more thrilling than any strange out-of-the-way trails. I give my living-room one last loving look. Truly I have stamped it with our personalities. I pass out to watch the dispatch boat drop anchor. And watching I see two men get out of it into the sampan. Old friend or stranger with my husband? I do not yet know. But as guest he gives significance to this afternoon when this house is first completely mine.

The gate creaks on its hinges with the weight of its iron. I watch my husband and this other man come up the flight of stone steps through the gate, and along the gravel path between the sentinel evergreens. My guest I see on this so significant after-

noon is to be a stranger. He is young, I notice, and very slim. I go to meet them in the hall.

"This is the one member of the staff you haven't seen," said my husband, "Mr. Grant got in from up-country this noon, and as all the men were out at the mess I brought him over to tea." As I shake hands with him, I feel overpowered. I had not expected this particular member of the staff to look so young and then, too, I suddenly realized how big and inaccessible Hunan is. Here we have been in Changsha for two months and are only just meeting this youngest member of my husband's staff!

My husband had told me soon after our arrival that there was one agency of his territory situated at Tungjen and that it took a month to get to it and that one of his staff was up there at the time. This slim-looking boy with whom I was shaking hands was that member. As his history flashes through my mind, I feel a little overpowered. At the time of our coming, there had been a debate between the Changsha and Shanghai offices as to whether or not to keep this man up-country any longer. He had been gone three months at the time, it had taken him a month to get there and two months he had been working to bring the agent into line. That had not been accomplished, but if they brought this young man back and sent in another it meant an arduous month of travel for another man. Pure waste it seemed when there was a man already there.

On the other hand, this individual had been off in the interior for an unusually long time. The question was how much could he stand? What was his capacity for enduring loneliness? He was only one year away from home; a year ago he had been a senior walking the campus of one of our eastern colleges. I don't suppose in any one day of that year he had spent more than an hour by himself. And now here he was, twelve months later, up there in the interior of China surrounded by men alien to him in thought, emotions, ways of life, and language. Could he stand up, was the question, under such sudden and prolonged isolation? Some men who get too much of it all at once it marks with abnormality for life. All this passed through my mind as I welcomed him.

As we went into the living-room I remembered too that Shanghai had thought it best that he be recalled. The odds they thought were too great in his staying. Changsha had telegraphed him to return but in his answering telegram he had begged to be allowed to remain and finish the job he had started. It had been a battle and he was just winning. The upshot of it was that he had stayed and the business had dragged itself out another two months. It had seemed natural to me at the time for him to stay, just a right-minded attitude to business. It was a bandit-infested territory. He was there and safe as long as he stayed there. Another man would have to run the gauntlet of the bandits all over again. But

now as I saw him I realized it took a particular type of bravery to choose of one's own accord the boredom and the isolation of two more months in the interior; for boredom it is, a stultifying paralyzing boredom if you look too long on a civilization so different from your own that you are at every point only a spectator, never a participator.

I watched this youngest of my husband's staff as I busied myself with the tea-things, watched his eyes travel from bookcase to bookcase, from the hyacinths standing in blue-green jars on an old gate-leg table to the silver and glass on the tea-tray. I watched with satisfaction when he smiled and then sank back with an audible sigh into an easy chair. "You don't know," he said, turning to me with a kind of boyish bashfulness against much feeling, "how very nice this is. I mean getting back." But didn't I? I was glad I had companioned my husband enough to enter into this moment, the moment when things of your own civilization touch you as it were on the very quick of your heart

After tea the two men settled back into contented "shop talk," my husband lighting and relighting his favorite pipe and the younger man smoking his cigarette. I sat "listening in" on the conversation and again joy rose in my throat with that poignant choking sensation of grief. Something in the two men's attitude gave to me the sense of success in my creation, my home. I drew the four walls of my house

around these two frontiersmen of trade who so much of the time went without their own civilization. I laid my spell over them—the spell of the homesteader. I felt them relax under my power, draw strength and vitality from the atmosphere I had put into that room. For eight years I had been at work on my creation, an American home abroad, trying to catch that subtle eluding vitality and happiness, America's unique contribution when she was herself, a contribution that only a new country can make. And sometimes, as today, I was rewarded with this unconscious response to it.

Then I fell to wondering, as so often, about that tall skyscraper of the curving side in Lower New York, what it thought of us, the wives; whether it took into consideration that we also were members of its staff; whether it knew that in us lay the power to make or break its men; whether it was able to conceive of how life-giving were our powers.

But most of all I was thinking how much I wanted a few more materials for my creation—what would correspond to a brushful of strong color to the artist. I should like to have increased my power enough to cause youth in the guise of a pretty girl to come in from the vague darkness of the hall and touch to life the spark of fire in this young man sitting so quietly talking about business. But alas there was no such thing as a young girl in my island town.

Into these purely feminine thoughts of mine filtered

the men's conversation; the talk of the country, my husband's cross-examination of the younger man, the money market, the growing opium trade, the bands of bandits increasing under the disruption of the country. "How about the bandits?" I heard my husband ask.

"Pretty bad," answered the youth. "Growing in power all the time. I had to get a band to escort me down. It was the only way to get out. They were bold enough to attack a hundred soldiers escorting a Chinese the week before I left. . . . Took all their guns away from them. The head man in Tungjen said it would take him a month to equip two hundred soldiers to escort me. I could not wait."

"How did you manage it?" asked my husband.

"Through a go-between. Two hundred dollars was the best bargain I could drive. For that they promised to escort me to the boundary of the province. That was as far as their authority held. I figured, though, it would be cheaper than feeding two hundred soldiers . . . and quicker . . . and probably safer. . . . The chief of the bandits escorted me down himself."

"What was he like?" I asked with interest.

"Oh, he was old," said the youth, "and wore ragged clothes and looked absolutely harmless. But I knew he wasn't." Here the youngest member of the staff gave me a boyish grin. "And once just to prove it," he went on, "my bandit woke up and fired his gun and a whole crowd of ragged fellows



*THE native women working at their silks
knew also this clutch of fear.*

sprang up along the shore with every kind of gun you could imagine. They all fired once, then dropped and disappeared so quickly they seemed to melt into the ground. . . ."

"How about the conditions in that part of the country?" asked my husband.

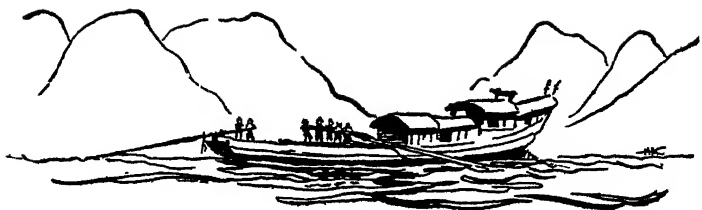
"Very bad. The bandits pick one place clean, then move on to another section."

"We've been lucky so far," said my husband. "None of the company men have ever been taken. But others have, missionaries and men from other firms," he said speaking as if he were unconscious he was voicing his concern.

Outside I could see the long shadows of the willows falling across the flower borders, with Yolosan over on the mainland a dark mass against the evening pink of the sky. And here in the soft light within the house the three of us sat peacefully in deep comfortable chairs, the men smoking and I sewing and all three discussing bandits. For a moment in this setting, like as two peas to hundreds of homes in America, this discussion struck me as fantastic. We should have been discussing automobiles with this youth, or pretty girls. Then the memory of that clutch at my heart of late when my husband started for the interior made it real. The bandits and the soldiers were coming to be the background of all our life. Thus on the day of the completion of my home I felt the black wings of dread hovering over it.

Would this always be a frontier of international trade? Here just as we had turned the corner of frontier hardship in the company, done our pioneer homesteading, become established in every province, got certain treaty rights, secured comfortable homes, we fall upon these evil days of China's turmoil. Each year China was growing more and more disrupted. Monarchy had gone, but the republic was simply a chaos. War lords ruling each province lived upon the people until they too grew restive. Yearly the bandits were recruited from the ranks of the war lords' unpaid soldiers, and these restive common folk. We who lived and worked in the country did it at our own peril. More and more did we women know this clutch at our hearts when our men went into the interior.

I thought too of all the little farm huts throughout the country, nestled under their groves of bamboos and mulberry. They had always made some strong appeal to me, invariably awakening the nostalgia of homemaking within me. Perhaps it was because they seemed so near to the first idea of shelter. The native women in these knew even more than I this clutch of fear. They were without redress from these bandits roaming over their country.



CHAPTER XVII

AND HERE ARE LOVERS

A YEAR of this cycle of three, the ninth year of my homesteading, has passed, the quietest, most uneventful year I have known in China. Despite all Hunan's reputation for turmoil she has lived this year in comparative peace with her neighbors and herself. As for me, this company house has harbored me within its dignity and bequeathed to me its ordered ways. Perhaps it is a temporary lull. Almost though have I been persuaded to put away the attitude of the homesteader and choose peace for the luxury of my soul!

I sit this afternoon on the veranda outside my bedroom listening to the pulse of my house's life. In the depths of it as if it were the house's breathing, I hear the tinkle of dishes and the tinkle of my amah's laughter. Today joy, youth, and wings appear to be brooding over my house. In the kitchen I have Darby and Joan. That Hunanese cook who a year ago was produced so miraculously from just outside my gate has been succeeded by numerous Hunanese

cooks who had too great a flair for squeeze and too little flair for cooking. Just as my worst fears of the Hunanese were being confirmed and I was in despair, who should appear but my old actor cook who had officiated in "the cave." This is his third appearance in my household. With his left hand he is a cook and his right an actor. Last year it was his left hand that was the silent partner. He went on the road, his company doing the lumber towns along the Yalu in Manchuria.

But this year he is tired of cold outdoor stages for his night's lodging and the mincing women's parts he plays, and he has hunted me out here in this difficult province of Hunan. He walked in one day between cooks, won over the Hunanese of other departments of the house, and took possession of my kitchen. Like the one in the cave it is now gay with drawings of furious warriors with black beards, fierce leers, and daggers held aloft, and surprising ladies in mammoth head-dresses and simpering attitudes. These drawings have always been a kind of by-product of his cooking. I have never been able to decide whether these paintings relieve the artistic urge within him, thus making more reliable his cooking, or give the necessary artistic dash that makes the food he cooks so delectable.

I hear him now beating eggs for a cake and in high falsetto voice singing the last lament of one of his ladies. Cake bowl in hand, he is undoubtedly

grovelling on his knees before an imaginary cruel husband to the audience of the boy, the coolies, the gardener, the sampan-man, the washman, and the amah.

And there is where I introduce you to my Darby and Joan. My young and pretty amah was entranced with my romantic actor cook from the very day of his arrival. The drama is complete even unto the cruel husband to whom she was married when a mere child. From where I am sitting on the upstairs veranda I hear her now quietly entering my bedroom. I hear the pat-pat of her tiny bound feet, then the more vigorous pat-pat of the pillows and the swish of the sheets as she smooths up my bed. She wants to assure me that she has no other thought but her work, and that she has not been down in the kitchen admiring the cook, oh dear me no!

"Missie,—” She sings the word, stressing the last syllable as she comes to the doorway that opens on the veranda where I sit watching the sun move towards Yolosan, the hollows of which are filling with amber and amethyst light. "You wantchee me brushee your hair? Master come soon." As her brush moves rythmically back and forth I continue to dream. Beyond my garden wall a whimsical Chinese flute quavers into life down a twisting path shadowed by willows. The soft vibration of a temple gong stirs the air and then I behold come riding down that path the gods! Surely in Hunan delightful things

happen to mortals! Great, big, fierce, temple gods go riding along in big, red chairs, and little, comfortable, household gods, their arms folded, looking ridiculously pleased with themselves, ride by in their little chairs on the shoulders of mortals. Amah stretches on the points of her tiny toes to see above my head, and we both laugh as the funny laughing Buddha with a big, round belly like Santa Claus, the favorite god of Hunan, rides down the path.

Bang! go the gongs. Across the green island trail the gods and their bearers and following behind, like the tail of a kite made of tattered blue bits of cloth sewed to a string, come the children. In hobble-de-hoy fashion, round and round the island the procession goes until all the world seems set to the hobble-de-hoy rythmn of that flute. Something is going to happen. Joy, adventure, spring, rebellion are in the air!

* * * * *

I was right. Things did happen. That was the end of uneventful days. That afternoon of love and singing in the kitchen, and gods marching on the highways with Pan piping at their heels was but the forerunner of more stirring days, like the overture at the opera, where motives of the dramatic theme to follow are introduced to awaken your attention. They began that very afternoon when a company youth clad in the shining wings of romance alighted on our doorstep.



*I*N the dim old streets with their open shop fronts.

It happened in this wise. Amah continued to hover over me with appealing maternal business, patting my neck with powder, insisting on another pin in my hair in order that all might be as it should be when the "master" came. For was he not the most important person in the house, amah argued, and so kind. "He has not beat you since I came a year ago," says amah. "And he talks to you, and laughs, and picks up your handkerchief many times a day. Not at all like our husbands. He is indeed a wonderful master worthy of the powder and the careful hair . . . and obedience," she adds as an afterthought. Then with a last whisk she was off to the kitchen and I to meet the despatch launch which I heard summoning its sampan, and we left the hobble-de-hoy flute and the gods to their own devices. Perhaps that was not wise. At any rate it was then that things began to happen.

As on that day a year ago, my husband was not alone when he came in for tea. He brought with him a new man, sent up by the company. He was a "griffin." That is, a man straight out from home and so a dark horse as far as his abilities in foreign trade were known. In China all untried ponies sent in for the races are called "griffins." Thus the term. Our "griffin" still looked a trifle dazed. It was easy to see that we seemed to him as remote from the real world as Mars. Although he was too polite to speak of our isolation, he did not seek to hide the fact that

his own sat heavily upon him. I was used to these first moments of beginners, but I felt in this "griffin" some extra bit of strain and a strong sense of excitement which I had not detected in other griffins.

But of course, I thought a little sadly, he will never take me into his confidence and the adventure whatever it is. Almost as deep a barrier, I had found, lay between untried youth and our nine years' experience as between East and West. Because we had gray hair they would never believe that we had adventures or listened to Pan, whom I heard even now piping at the other end of the island. I wondered if this "griffin" heard him

Then, as my husband was called away to answer a telegram, the impossible happened. This youth took me into his confidence! He was in love and he needed my help. With engaging assurance he asked for it. He had met a girl on the steamer. He was certain—now do not smile, you who have progressed beyond the age when coincidence spells God's hand—that they were decreed for each other from the beginning of the world. This coming on the same boat, when she had intended to make the trip later and he had meant to sail from another port, was undoubtedly the handwriting on the wall. He told me so. Therefore how could I doubt it? He told me also that since he had left her two days ago in Hankow he had gone through an eternity. It was more than either of them could bear. Now certainly in the

light of all this I could see that they must be married immediately. That was the moment when I ceased to listen to Pan; my nine years' experience in this business rose up before me bidding me admonish him.

"But," I expostulated, "you can't marry. There's the promise which all men make to the company. Of course, it's only morally binding but there's your honor. It's a temporary vow for celibacy," and I smiled faintly at the old company joke, hoping thus to lessen the sting of my refusal to see the need for his immediate marriage.

"But," he broke in, "it's preposterous that men from a free country should not marry when they wish to. I did not think I should ever want to when I promised. I'd made up my mind to some rot about always being a bachelor. But you see I hadn't met Myra then. I could not help that, could I?" he asked, as if that settled the question.

"You don't understand," I began, and then stopped. Tongue-tied I looked at this young man sitting in front of me. How was I going to explain the East to him? He would probably interrupt me again if I began. To explain would only make me seem old to him and without capacity for that grand and glorious thing, adventure—me who had been fed on adventure for eight years, had had it for my daily sustenance!

But that was what he was going to have to learn for himself, that adventure was strong meat, and

that he had got to prove his capacity for it before the company felt sure enough of him to risk his marriage, for then there would be two to test and two to send home in case either found adventure unpalatable. There were many ingredients that went into the making of adventure which he did not know about, loneliness, for instance, and temptation and hardship, as well as the danger and excitement which he was probably coveting. Would he and she care to taste them all? I was wondering, but I could not ask him such questions.

I sat, silent, thinking of all these things and of the treadmill of drudgery in adventure as in all other great things. This I could not explain either. Probably he would not believe me even if I told him, any more than he had believed that marriage was not wise now. He did not wish to think whether the wheel of foreign business would break him or not. So all I said rather lamely was, "it's a regulation."

He looked very disappointed in me for being so subservient but forgave me a little when I did "come across," as he would have put it, and ask him to wire Myra to come and visit us for the week he was to have before he went up country.

* * * * *

Myra has arrived! How shall I explain to you my excitement, to you in America who have love and youth walking up and down your streets every

day? For a year I have not seen a young girl or a pair of lovers and I may not again for another year or two. And these young lovers belong to me in that close intermingling of interests we have in this corporation life. Not that they realize this. They are youth, and believe they sprang full-grown from the head of Jove and belong to no one. Not that that makes any difference, for by the law of the twentieth century corporation solidarity they belong to me just the same.

But about Myra. She's a lovely thing, akin to the hobble-de-hoy flute and the circling gods, and her spirit and her feet go on wings. You would have known it if you had seen her this morning as she came down our well-like stairs and along the hall where pictures of calm Buddhas hang. She came with the same rushing sound that the pigeons make when they fly from the roof of my house at daybreak. Like them, in a moment, she was hidden in the garden, and the company house which has taken unto itself so many company people was left breathless after that fleeting rush of youth through its heart. Love in the garden, love in the kitchen, and woven into the house's depth our own well tried happiness. Indeed the hobble-de-hoy flute is well companioned.

* * * * *

What words are there to describe that week. My husband's and my apprehension grew with the days.

The thing we watched proved to be no light-hearted skirmishing with Cupid as we had at first thought it was going to be. This was age-old, primal passion which possessed them and over it stood a kind of Saint George—that promise made to New York. Which would win, the high honor of the man's promise or that ruthless passion? Could they bear the test? Part at the end of the week for two long years, he to do the Company's work in the interior, she to rejoin her party making a tour of the East, and go back to America and wait for him? This youth was hot and tumultuous and not used to denial.

Five days gone! A strange, tense sensation was taking possession of the house, the feeling that we all had only that week to live. Just four times a day now, at meal time, do we see our lovers. Then starry-eyed, very polite, very grateful to their host and hostess, they sit one on each side of us at the table. As we leave the dining-room, the door into the garden draws them like a magnet. We watch them go down the steps, gazing at each other as if that sitting on opposite sides of the table had been years of separation. How, I think, must they be regarding the two-year, half-the-earth-between separation to come? As my husband and I look at the merging line of their retreating figures we know that their host and hostess, China, America, the company, are wiped clean out of their minds. We are under no delusion now. Saint George is going to have to battle for his life.

It's Saturday morning. Only one more day to live.

It's Saturday at tea-time! There is only the rest of today to live! The boat leaves at dawn. It's like having the sword of Damocles suspended over our heads . . . or our hearts. I fumbled with the tea-things, for as I looked at our lovers sitting side by side on the couch I saw the dawning of fear in Myra's eyes. She was seeing clearly for the first time that stern Saint George of a promise standing over them. She saw herself at bay without defenses. She looked from one to the other of us, and found no hope in us. We stood with Saint George. The next time I dared glance up from the tea-things I saw the same dumb fear in both pairs of eyes. Then he clutched at her hand, and a shiver like flame ran through her and her fear was swallowed up in that hot, primal love. For a long time after they had gone out I sat in the peace of our living-room. Youth is so terrible. There is no healing in its suffering or its love.

It is evening, the last evening of the world! Our lovers have gone for one final hour in the garden before Myra goes to the steamer. From the upstairs veranda I watch the moon throw the pattern of the trees over the garden paths and the flower borders out of which the tulips rise like stunning bits of embroidery. Out on the river in memory of those lying at rest in its depths the Chinese have set afloat a thousand, thousand, scarlet paper cups of oil that drift slowly with the current—floating beds of tulips.

Under the flaring light of torches, in their chairs on the shoulders of men, the gods again wander, guided by the hobble-de-hoy flute. At dinner-time the cook had tube-roses behind his ears and amah had them in her hair. All the world is again held by love and youth.

* * * * *

What have we done? Pan is dead! I was watching the gods and the floating tulips when there was a knock at my door and Myra came in to say good-bye. She sat on the edge of my bed with every line of her body stretched taut with anguish. At tea-time she was still a child. In this little interval she had become a woman. Even while the gods and the moon possessed the earth some fierce tornado of experience has taken her up and swept her out of her youth.

"I've come to thank you," she began. I saw I was to have gratitude, not confidence. Why can I not help her?

"Whatever happens you won't ever think us ungrateful, will you?" she demanded. I was too much moved to speak so I took her hand. It was icy cold.

"I'd like to tell you something but I won't . . . I can't . . . but you promise always to believe in me, don't you?" she demanded again. Why was my opinion so suddenly necessary to her? Swiftly she kissed me, and fled hastily before I could stop her.

* * * * *

I wander from window to window. The beds of tulips have floated away, the moon has dropped behind Yolosan. I look across to the Butterfield wharf. It is dark. The steamer and Myra have gone. The spring dawn is cold. I creep shiveringly to bed.

As I lie there, through the company house and through the centres of my being I feel stirring that larger personality of my house. I hold in my keeping the shared life of the company people which is the house's spirit. So Myra's cold hand lay on my heart and on the pulse of the house, and would not give us peace.



CHAPTER XVIII

TWO KINDS OF SOLITUDE

I AWOKE that Sunday morning to find my house steeped in quiet, its harmonies recreated. I felt myself dipping into it and the deep soft quiet of our own union. It is like bathing in some cool sheltered pool after a march in parching sunlight. Immediately I felt less bruised by this company life shared with the "griffin."

I tread the grass in the garden, I lay my hand on its cool surfaces wet with dew. The sentinel arborvitæ that mark the gateway in the hedge and all the hedges are hung with mist, and so are the long brilliant strands of the willow that sweep down nearly to the flower borders and the birds' pool. The earth in the garden beds is wet and pungent. I transplant tiny green plants into that pungent earth to the sound of the gardener's broom along the paths. And all about me is a high wall, my garden wall that shuts me into seclusion. The black iron gates to the back of the island stand open. A carrying

coolie comes slowly up the steps with two dripping pails of water hanging from the ends of the pole on his shoulder.

When I stand up I see through this opening the backwater of the river covered with bits of floating mist. Mirrored in the water are shreds of white mist, and streaks of amber sunlight, and little mauve clouds. Beyond is the great green mass of Yolosan, but I do not go outside. And I do not glance at the gate at the front of the island beyond which lies the main stream of the river with the trade of the world on its bosom; steamboats, lighters, junks coming up loaded with oil, with tobacco, with copper, with calico; steamers, rafts, junks going down loaded with rice, with opium, with firecrackers, with linen, with zinc, with lead, with antimony. The trade of the world outside my window, outside my gate. For this day our compound wall shuts it all away, guards us with seclusion. For today I shall keep from my house the bustle and strife of trade, the mingled life of the company, the turbulent city across the way, this independent province of Hunan, China, of shifting governments. I do not even glance at my sampan which I need at this season to take me to the island people.

The mist is burnt up, the half tropic sun beats down on me. I penetrate deeper into my seclusion. The great rooms of my house, where my husband sits all day today reading, take me unto themselves,

enfolding me like a blessing. And so I gain strength for the next knock upon my door.

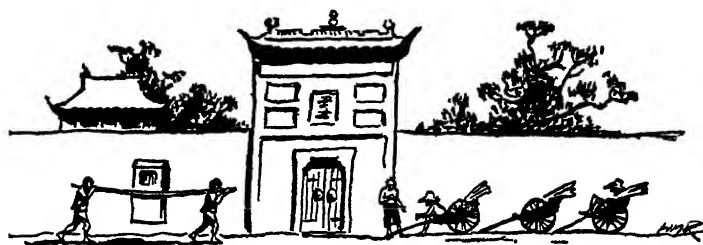
Monday, the peace carries over. I fall once more into dreams. I potter in my garden. I watch the rose stalks on the round bamboo poles of the pergola grow like Jack's beanstalk. I hover over the swelling buds of the Dorothy Perkins showing the first faint flush of pink spread over the whole of the pergola. I listen to the distant hum of the city and the nearer hum of the island.

Tuesday, this morning at daybreak, there was the pat-pat of coolie's bare feet on my stairs as they carried out my husband's traveling kit, the cot, bedding roll, and food baskets. My husband with the actor cook as body servant left this morning at daylight for an up-country inspection trip. Some agent has fallen in arrears and must be watched. The harmony of my house and myself have been broken. This is a different solitude, a solitude without power.

A change too comes over the smiling face of the island. Gray clouds gather. The soft spring wind rises into a hint of menace. The sailboats scud by like fugitives fleeing. Junks huddle to the shore. By night the island, the houses are caught in one of the sudden storms common in the Yangtse valley. The wind beats in terrifying blasts at the house's strong walls, and the little island seems swallowed up in wind and water. As I lie in my bed and listen to the roar of the wind and the sound of the river like the

dash of the ocean against the compound embankment, I think how little is my island, how shrunken its personality in the face of the wind and water, how shrunken I feel without my husband, alone here in my big house, on an island, in the midst of China.

Then it was that the bugaboo of bandits in the interior assaulted me with all its hideous force. Then it was also that I took strength from the knowledge that in the flotsam and jetsam of this homesteading another friendship had recently been given to me. Within the cream-colored stucco walls of the British consulate my friend dwells. In this night of wind and lashing rain I take strength from the thought of that friend and her family, from the strong substance of their friendship.



CHAPTER XIX

ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

A WEEK, two, pass. My house-boy comes to me, talking a little excitedly of the Japanese. But what is that? The Hunanese are apt to become excited.

"Splendid," I answered him. "The Japanese carpenter is here with my new table. Tell him to come in. And has he brought the new lamp, too?" I sigh with pleasure. That is one of the compensations for living in China. The Oriental workman brings many a dream of mine to pass.

"No, no, Taitai (great lady)," cries my boy. "You do not understand and I cannot speak the English."

"Tell the carpenter to come in. I will talk to him," I answer.

The boy goes out and returns not with the carpenter but with my binoculars.

"Why do you not do as I tell you?" I ask, a little impatiently.

"Please Taitai, come and see," he begs. At last,

fully awake to the note of distress in his voice, I follow him to the terrace, where it is high enough for me to look over the wall and see the river and the city. I look through the glasses which the boy thrusts into my hand. At the Japanese wharf I see one of their steamers docking. "Boy," I say in my poor Chinese, "you can get lamb today." (It is the beginning of our open season and we are still excited over the things we have been deprived of all winter, which now come from Hankow.)

Suddenly something makes me look closer. Through the binoculars I notice for the first time a big crowd of white-gowned Chinese boys gathering on the bund and swarming down on to the wharf. They are running this way and that. I hear yelling, then a shot. At first I do not comprehend that it is a shot. I think it is but the noise of giant firecrackers. All our days in Hunan are tuned to wedding firecrackers and funeral firecrackers and festival day firecrackers. I look again. I see Japanese sailors from the gunboat clambering over the ship's sides. I see the crowd tumbling about like rice poured pell-mell from a sieve. I hear a shot, unmistakable this time, and I see a white robed figure roll down the steps of the wharf like a sack of meal.

"I! Yah!" exclaim my servants, grouped excitedly about me.

"The Japanese have killed one of us!" That uneasy peace of Hunan is shattered! Even here on the island

I can feel the angry hate against Japan breaking over the city.

Absorbed in my own business of homemaking, hovering over the lovers, nestling into the after solitude, marking time until my husband's return, I had not until now caught the changed pulse of Hunan or remembered when we came to what China's youth commemorate as China's Shame Day, the anniversary of The Twenty One Demands. And yet I had been on China's border the day those Twenty One Demands had been made and seen the tense hatred of Japan which had come that day into China. Here now today in Hunan all around me in the hearts of my servants, and in the city across the river was the aftermath of that terror and hatred China had felt when she awoke to what Japan was doing.

As I had felt the insistent appeal of America's new youth through the "griffin" and Myra, felt their rebellion, I now on this June morning felt the touch of China's youthful rebellion. The students, whose newly acquired Western learning lay like a light fall of snow over the deep dark earth of their Eastern beliefs and customs, were experiencing for the first time the goad of patriotism. (Patriotism belongs to new China.) In high excitement they had declared that the youth of China would rid the country of the hated Japanese. They forgot that their own house needed to be set in order: that their bandits

laid waste their villages, stole their rich men's sons, and discredited them internationally by carrying off missionaries and business men. They seemed even to forget that Japan had returned Shantung.

Indeed they would rid their country of her. A few weeks before they had declared a boycott. They swore they would use no Japanese-made article and to see that no one else of their countrymen did. They had declared a universal strike of students from their schools as a protest against the greed of their officials.

As I stood there with my servants, looking across at that pathetic, helpless group which had sought with their immature hands to stem the currents of international trade, I thought of their leaders whom I had seen in Peking a few months before, charming young people, for the most part educated in America or England, graduates of Harvard and Oxford, who had started this fierce cry of China for the Chinese. "Let us do away with all things from the West," was their cry. I had seen them riding in their beautiful motor cars, clad in their beautiful silks and satins, their own national dress. I had seen them in their theatres, swept with admiration for their matinee idol—Mei Lang Fang. I had visited them in their homes, where things from East and West mingled a bit incongruously. I had heard them claiming that all the old, and all of the West must go from their beliefs. A new order was to come out of the old

chaos They with their own hands would build a new world!

And now here were these students far off in Hunan blindly following those sophisticated young people of the capital. They met at the Japanese wharf when the steamers came in. They tried to stamp with a red seal the cheek of each Chinese passenger coming off a Japanese steamer. They jerked from the head of unsuspecting citizens any hat that they thought had been made in Japan. They went into the shops and destroyed all merchandise from Japan. A few of the radicals even posted an edict of Eastern vengeance to enforce this new patriotism. They had even threatened to cut off the ears of those who still persisted in using Japanese goods! But at this, the governor of the province, older and wiser, shook his head. But he, too, was a little afraid of the power of this organized youth. And now this morning they had gone to the Japanese wharf and dumped cargo into the river.

I looked again at that white clad crowd across the river, cluttered together in a helpless mass at this first retort of Japan's. I was witnessing this rebellion of youth which had been circling the earth. There were the "Wild Birds" of Germany and the Young Student movement of Turkey. In America and England too it had come since the war, but it was more personal, the rebellion of individuals like Myra and our "griffin." However, I might ignore for a time

such things; my house sat in the midst of Hunan and these problems and belonged to them.

As I turned to the house after the tragedy on the Japanese wharf, my boy again rushed towards me, again thrusting the binoculars into my hands and pointed up river. I obeyed, meekly this time, expecting to see more tragedy. But lo, far away at the upper point of the island I saw the blue flag of the company floating gaily in the spring wind, at the prow of the company launch. My husband was back from his up-country trip! I forgot the spring morning's toll of death, I forgot the revolt of China's youth, I forgot young company people. I had eyes or thoughts for nothing but the company launch.

* * * * *

My house is once more a thing complete. My husband's papers and pipes litter the tables. The strong smell of tobacco is in every room. The strength of his presence knits up the house's life. Once more the ogre of up-country capture of my husband by bandits is exorcised from my heart. On the stairs is again the bustle of activities. The coolies go up and down carrying bedding roll, cooking utensils, and the big, square, bamboo food baskets used on the cross-country trekking. All are put safely away, locked up in the storeroom to which "Missie" holds the key.

But indeed quiet sits lightly over these company houses. The day and its impressions are yet young!

At three I get a hastily scribbled note from my husband telling me to get the food baskets, the cooking utensils, the bedding roll and tinned food to the boat in preparation for a couple of days' trip down river. And wonder of wonders, prepare for myself to go too, for this work is along the river where the growing danger of bandits and soldiers is not too great. I may come too! I lock up the coal and the food against the inroads of "squeeze," and with entire peace of mind turn over everything else in the house to the servants.

I have learned to do these things quickly, so within an hour I am at the office, where I sit watching my husband in discussion with an elderly Chinese gentleman correctly attired in a long, gray silk coat and black trousers neatly tied at the ankles. From the back of his collar a fan protrudes. In the seemingly heated argument going on between these two men, one of the West, one of the East, he takes it out often to fan himself. I look about this correct Western office building with its roller-top desks, its safes, and its card-catalogues; I watch the Chinese clerks in their short coats moving about. In the inner rooms where they work I catch glimpses of their teapots standing amidst their letter-files and daily-sales reports. From its frame in my husband's private office that tall building with the curving side looks down on us all. So, too, does the great old man survey us.

Five o'clock comes and the Chinese clerks begin to go out through the big doorway by twos and

threes. Two of them pass, holding hands as do girls at home. I watch them and the dusty bund where fish lie drying on great mats, rickshas pass, and coolies with dripping water pails move against the horizon filled with the masts of great junks. Beyond is our green island. I sit and wonder: what do all these—the correct Chinese adviser in the office, those youthful clerks, the water coolies outside—feel about the morning's demonstration? How much does this leaven of new patriotism touch them?

My husband and the "number one" Chinese gentleman who is to accompany us, come out and we go out together to the waiting launch. "My hyacinths did not blossom well this year." My husband translates what the Chinese gentleman would say to me. We have the bond of our gardens.

As we move down river there reach us the strains of reveille played uncertainly, over and over, on cracked horns by soft untrained lips. Students come parading up the bund in honor of their dead comrade of the morning. How familiar to us is this parade. In the new China of the students when any reform is desired they parade. The three of us watch them marching up the dirty uncared-for bund. They walk with the loose shuffling step of the physically untrained Oriental. On, on they straggle, an endless line of them, dwindling in size from high school to grammar, yea even to primary school children, the flags in their limp hands often dragging in the dust

of the bund. Strange sight: mere children going out of school on strike to adjust the affairs of a nation, a nation where but a few years ago only the aged ever spoke in the councils of state. And now perhaps they have more power than any country's youth.

I look at the Chinese gentleman as he surveys, with impassive gaze, these marching youth. "I have locked Mo Mo up," he remarks much in the same tone as he told me his hyacinths were not doing well this year.

"What?" says my husband. "I thought you had him in one of the mission schools."

"Yes," answered his father, "but I brought him home last night and locked him up. He is better locked up." He vouchsafes no other explanation, but he looks with fine Oriental contempt at the youths marching on the bund. He belongs to China's old patriarchal system and, although Mo Mo is his favorite son, the son of his favorite wife, we know that he will stay locked up an indefinite period until his father deems it wise to let him out. Mo Mo is nineteen. Thus would the old China put behind bars this yeast of youthful rebellion.

We all fall silent, each busy with his own thoughts. With different emotions we and this Chinese gentleman look out upon the last of those marching children and the last of the city's bunding built so painstakingly long ago, robbed of its dignity by the carelessly discarded city's refuse.

Our launch carries us into a wide sweep of the river with green dikes and greener rice paddies for our outlook. We pass our "Installation" with its long galvanized iron sheds and round tanks looming up over the compound wall. Then they too slip behind us and the unbroken green of the Chinese countryside greets us. The Chinese gentleman goes below and we are left alone to contemplate the little white-walled villages, the trees throwing reflections into the river, the pale blossoms of vines hanging from them in festoons. The rhododendrons show on the hillsides. Hunan is very beautiful this evening.

But Hunan was not done with us yet on this first day of June. Just as the sun went down we anchored by the village whose oil agent my husband wished to see, a village whose entire industry was the making and glazing of wine and water jugs and clay cups for incense. On one side of the river lay the thriving market street. We could see it from the launch, old and worn stone steps led up to it from the river. Like a tunnel the market burrows its way between the jumbled, open shops. Across the river was the village of the potters, nestled deep under old and gnarled trees and self-created hills. Ovens built upon ovens, through the centuries, had made the hills. Now up them climb the ovens of today, looking like the exposed vertebræ of some huge, prehistoric animal or China's mythological dragon. There, in the last rays of the day, they stretch them-

selves, the fire just dying down in their mouths at the base of the hills, and the smoke still coming from their tails on the peaks of the hills. Only four short hours were we from those marching children of new China. In reality we have come the long, long journey of centuries. Thus did my day end.

We divided our forces quite equally the next morning. My husband, with the Chinese gentleman correct to the last fold of his trousers, safe in the traditions of tradition-bred China, satisfied with his wives and his children, especially Mo Mo safely locked up against the influence of the new, took sampan for the market streets and the work of the twentieth century—that highly organized oil business. And I, with the young captain of the launch as guide, took sampan for the sixteenth or fifteenth century nestled among the pottery hills. It mattered not which you called it, fifteenth or sixteenth century. There was little difference in a mere century in this village. Time moved so slowly.

My sampan nosed its way into the muddy shore. The laodah handed me gallantly from stepping stone to stepping stone, on to a mud-banked landing place. Simple, this stepping into the past. In five minutes' time after leaving the launch, I was walking the old, old paving stones of the old-as-time village. A nice, dark, drowsy old street bordered with dark, drowsy, old shops. The same thing was happening here to-day, as I stepped debonairly into it from the

twentieth century, as had been happening for a few hundred years—just drowsing. I walked quickly, too quickly for fifteenth century decorum, down the roof-darkened street where shafts of light like spearheads lay on the pavements and the dirt floors of the windowless shops. Going quickly like that, I came without warning into the potter's village. Any pace would have been precipitate for me—native of the Middle West of America where we take our national experiences from a mere hundred years—that brought me into this village which today took its experiences from the days before Rome was built. Just so it probably looked then and just so it looked when Columbus set out to try his theory that the world was round, and to find a shorter route to the East India trade. Just so it looked when my forefathers sent their first sailing vessels to Canton, a bare four hundred miles away, and just so it looked today as my husband not a mile away transacted the affairs of the twentieth century. It appeared not to be affected by any such small affair as a mere century. What did it matter to it that in the hasty march of a few generations my country had achieved skyscrapers and big business; what did it matter to it that its country was acquiring them too?

I went on until I came to a hut made of the halves of peacock green jars wedged into its walls and a yellow thatched roof. As it stood in the middle of the path, I turned aside. This brought me to a tall ancient

tree leaning over a roof that looked like a peacock's tail, made up as it was of broken bits of blue-green and brown jars. The walls of this hut I could not see, so deep were they buried in the side of an oven hill, but as the roof stood directly in my path I turned again and this time I found myself standing in the courtyard of a potter's hut. Thus far, as nothing but the colorful huts had challenged me, I became bold and went and stood in the doorway of the potter's abode. Even my presence did not stir with curiosity the worker within. The man who worked there was not wont to give attention to the novel or strange. He listened only to his ancestors about whose coffins, resting on the rafters above, even now the sparrows were twittering. Round and round a crude pedestal the potter walked shaping the clay upon it. He had no potter's wheel. Potters' wheels were too new for him. They belonged to a later period in history. With a wooden mallet he hammered, smoothed and patted his jar into shape, making with a bit of rag its decoration of lines and flowers. He was bent almost into a hunchback with the years spent leaning over the beautiful green and black wine and incense pots, the creative urge for which lay somewhere far back in the dim centuries.

Faint and unreal came to me the bustle and achievement of my own Middle West. Almost was I removed from the power of the corporation business, the biggest power in my life. Faint, too, was the sound

of those marching feet of the young Hunan patriots of yesterday. Yet as I stood there it crossed my mind that it was not impossible that among those marching students of yesterday there had been a son of this man who listened only to the past. Louder sounded those marching feet of the Hunan youth, striving to break the mold of these undisturbed centuries. Did youth ever strive for its wings under so great a burden of the past?

All this is Hunan, this great inner province of China. The new schools after the pattern of the West, the potters' village, the dead student of yesterday, the bent man laboring without machinery. Peanut oil, smoky lamps were elements in Hunan, bright oil lights, and even electricity. There is Hunan with its bandits and soldiers living off the people, and there is student Hunan with its new patriotism. There is old industrial and business Hunan with the ancient guilds hundreds of years old, and there is modern business Hunan doing business with the great corporations of the West. That Chinese gentleman, the astute business man of old China with his old world sense of honor, is a part of Hunan as are the new business men of China. There is Mo Mo seething with new ideas, locked in his room, and there is the new style office man who wears a natty sack suit and straw hat from Japan, when there is no boycott, and who calls himself George Washington Longfellow Yih. There is my big house and its quiet garden,

where that evening I walked at sundown, placing the tall green wine pots I had bought that morning for thirty cents in the old village. I felt the prophecy of trouble in these strong forces warring upon each other. Some hot fires of experience would come before these incongruous parts were fused into modern China. How much would we partake of the wine and bread of China's resurrection?





CHAPTER XX

A BREAK IN OUR SOLIDARITY

THE world did not stop as our "griffin" thought it would when he parted from Myra that night. He has returned from his first baptism of isolation. He got in yesterday from his first up-country trip. Evidently love guarded him with a shining armor, for he treads the earth with the buoyancy of a god, or is it the intoxication of his return to his own civilization or perhaps just the rebound of youth? At any rate, love seems to be in the air once more. Amah has appeared with tuberoses in the buttons of her pretty blue coat, and one coquettishly tucked into the coils of her shining black hair. The cook wears the counterparts in debonair fashion behind his ear. The gods are circling again. There goes the jolly fat one, flowers over his ears, too.

* * * * *

I have stumbled upon what made our "griffin" look half god. I had gone over to Yolosan for ferns for my garden one afternoon. I had filled my baskets

with the giant, green ferns and had ordered my coolies to take them and wait for me below on the path that led to the village in the valley, while I myself climbed a little higher to the temple. I took an unfrequented path that led behind it, so as to look down upon its gray roofs set in the steep, green hill-side.

I had all but reached that spot, when right beside me in a cleft of the rocks I saw our "griffin" and beside him Myra! One moment more and my feet in the mountain shrubbery would have betrayed me to them. In the overwhelming confusion of my discovery only one thing seemed clear to me—that was that I did not want them to know that I had seen them. I felt I could not share with them their guilty secret.

So stealthily I sat down to await their going, necessarily an eavesdropper at this stolen feast of love. Through my mind raced all manner of questions. Why was not Myra well on her way around the globe? To be sure, I had wondered a little why I had heard nothing from her after she left Hankow, but the "griffin" had told me only yesterday that she was enjoying her trip! What did all this mean? My mind went back with a leap to Myra's defiance the night she had said good-bye to me and that fierce demand of hers to always believe in her. What had they done? What did it all mean? How long had Myra been here? Even youth should know that love

does not make you an invulnerable god. Nothing now, I felt, could protect them from the east wind of bitter experience.

What had they done? Had Myra upon that night of spring decided to put away the rite of marriage? If so, the bitterness was for her. That particular stigma was, of course, for the woman. That would not of necessity cost the "griffin" his job. But suppose (I was thinking with more clarity now) suppose Myra was safe within the conventions but the "griffin" had broken the code of business integrity, secretly broken his promise. Then things would go hard with him. A corporation out here has everything to gain in the upholding of its discipline, nothing much to lose in any one individual. That was the strength of a corporation. Not in one iota I felt did these two understand that in a corporation everyone, up to and including the biggest man, is a cog in the machine. A corporation lived by making no one an essential or an exception.

Sitting there, an unwilling listener, I began to have confirmation that this indeed was the foolhardy thing they had done. Yes, they had been secretly married! When and where baffled my wildest imaginings. Again I mourned. Had they not even glimpsed the enormity of their sin against us all? Were they so blind to our carefully built up *esprit de corps*, to the necessity of solidarity, of teamwork, on these trade frontiers?

And I gathered they were planning to keep the thing secret for two years! Even with their short experience in the East, did they think anything could be kept secret in it? There is no such thing as a secret in the East even among the natives, and we are as conspicuous among them as comets in the sky. As to ourselves, with our interests narrowed down to the doings of one tiny town and intensified by our isolation, we burrow continuously into the secrets of our neighbors.

Sitting there cramped in every limb and numb with the tumult of all these thoughts within me, I heard Myra give a sharp exclamation. "Look," she cried, "the valley is already in shadow."

"No, no," cried our "griffin," as if he could stop the day's going. "I only just came, kiss me once more."

"No, there is no time. There comes the old man."

I looked, dumfounded, for truly there came the old caretaker of the temple with a pole across his shoulder, a little basket of provisions at either end. So Myra was staying in the temple. Had she come up from Hankow for the "griffin's" return or had she been in the temple ever since that night? It must have been she had come up for this week-end. The news could not have failed to reach the little island town otherwise. Why, this spot was the island's playground! Foolish, untried youth! So it was to this mountain, frequented by white men and Chinese, and this little old Chinaman they had entrusted their

secret! Might as well entrust it to a traveling minstrel or a reel of the movie I thought with some impatience.

Myra was speaking once more. "Look," she cried, with a startled note in her high, almost childish treble. "See, that old man looks like justice with the scales upon his shoulders come to judge us"—and the girl shuddered a little. Poor Myra, she evidently felt some premonition of disaster. I longed to help her. I felt the call of my sex in trouble.

"Nonsense. You are nervous," the "griffin" was answering her with a little lordly condescension in his voice. "What judgment could there be for us? This is our own affair."

No judgment in China! How little he knew. How I longed to help them. Both were appealing in their way. Myra with her fluttering sense of distress, and the "griffin" with his god-like swagger. But I knew I was powerless. No judgment in China! The "griffin" forgot that the judgment which meant most to him came out of his own country and the big skyscraper to whom he had promised fidelity. Still, perhaps it was no wonder he thought so. To be as unique as white men are in China, and as important as each of us is, has been known to turn the head of older and wiser men than our "griffin." The first glimpse of oneself as a set-apart-human being is apt to be a trifle upsetting.

And truly the scene our "griffin" looked upon would delude a wiser man as to judgment days. With

the lovely girl beside him now his, I imagined how lordly he felt sitting here on this scrub-grown mountain side, with the tiny white world to which he belonged looking, as it lay down there below him in the midst of the river, as powerless as a toy. Even I, disciplined by years to the prying eyes of these villages, felt now as I looked at it, the diminution of its power. It looked indeed like a toy village made by some master German toymaker, with the Long Sand, now a narrow beach, picked out as carefully as if the toymaker had just laid it there. Our compound walls appeared to have been set up by the same careful hand out of children's building blocks, stiffly marking off a dozen neat toy garden plots within which stood toy houses set about by toy trees, exactly placed. As with half-abated breath I looked down on the pretty plaything, I too, so strong was the delusion, could scarcely believe that those diminutive houses, carefully placed in their gardens, were the company houses.

Just then the summer light went out of the sky. Even the shrubs at my feet were but dusky masses. Myra and the "griffin" moved off towards the temple. I was free to go. Even as I moved, the white village down below began to take on power. Its duties rose to meet me. I must hurry. I was due at a dinner that evening at the big Customs house, the gray and white house that looked like a frosted cake from the mountain top. I must not be late. The "griffin" was due

at the dinner too. I should have to sit at the table and not betray either to him or my very alert hostess, even by a flicker of an eyelid, that anything was wrong.

As I hurried down the mountain, in my distraught mind I could see the long gleaming dinner table, the island people sitting around it, and this secret of Myra's and the "griffin's" coming nearer and nearer. I watched its progress towards the group in the dining-room. The little old man of the temple (I knew his garrulous habits) would have told it to the fishmonger in the village at the foot of Yolosan while the two sat in the village tea-house. That afternoon the fishmonger had already, no doubt, told it to the man with the traveling kitchen. He would tell it to the ferryman. Oh dear, it was getting very near the island now and the all-knowing commissioner's wife. The ferryman would tell it to the man who peddled sweets to the servants in the company houses. He would undoubtedly tell it to the cook at the commissioner's house. Perhaps even now the cook was telling it to the commissioner's wife under the excuse of asking some detail about the dinner. Or perhaps it would come by another route. I may not have been the only member of the island community on Yolosan this afternoon; someone else who was to be at the dinner might have seen Myra. In either case the news would spread through the dinner party as fire spreads on a windy day.

It was only a question of time then until the Shanghai office learned of it.

I felt like a helpless mother as I pushed through the shrubbery to the main road down the mountain. I had no precedent on which to go as to what the company would do, but I had no illusions that they would forgive such a gesture of defiance—the way an irate father sometimes forgives an elopement. They could not afford to establish a precedent for rebellion. There were undoubtedly a dozen other young men, scattered over China, eating their hearts out at this very moment as they, like Jacob, served the years for their Rachels. This law of celibacy established on these frontiers of trade was not as unimportant as the “griffin” evidently thought it. It may even seem unimportant to you at home, or even a little theatrical, but nevertheless by some twist in this frontier pioneering which grows by the establishment of homes, it also lives by those first years of celibacy. Through the first struggles and temptations he indeed rides fastest who rides alone. Under the onslaught of all these thoughts I hurried along, intent on reaching the ferry before the “griffin.”

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That was a week ago. Nothing happened at the dinner party that night. My alarms were not realized. The crisis was to come from within, not from without. But for those seven days I watched that secret

stalking about the company house like an escaped skeleton from its traditional closet. I found little joy in my husband or my home because of it. This secret haunted me as any family skeleton is supposed to. I could not exorcise my house or myself as I did of most troublesome things by telling my husband because unfortunately he was not two persons. What he knew personally he would of necessity know officially. So I continued to worry about those two whose lives insisted on getting twined into mine.

How was it going to end? I worried about Myra alone over there in the temple. I looked anxiously for sign of one of the heavy storms which we had at this time of year. I longed to hear my husband say he was sending our "griffin" on another up-country trip. Then surely Myra would go away, and everything might yet work out. But it was too soon to send him again. It was futile to think of that as a way out.

So endlessly ran my thoughts until today, when again my house blessedly took me to itself. The steady march of its events at last made Myra and the "griffin" slip quietly out of my mind. Indeed, I belong to my house the way Izak belonged to the soil. That is indeed one of the reasons for my gratification in this setting up of my habitation on what seems to my own people like the frontiers of the earth. I love hand industries; I love to see created the things that make the sum total of a home; I

love to have it done within the four walls of my house. It is as if creation throbbing through every cell of my being finds rest only as it finds its counterpart all around it. Today the high tide of summer was here. My spirit rebounded to it, and I made a song for myself of the bare recital of work going on in my house.

The amah sat upstairs in a window overlooking the kitchen making over my silk-wadded quilts. She had two peasant women to help her. From the garden I could hear their chatter as with deft fingers they whisked the cocoon-like silk wadding about a little round stick and stretched and pulled the filmy stuff into webs as fine as spiders' webs. They laid innumerable webs, one upon the other, until they had a blanket softer than any down. It looked like a captured cloud being thrust into a bag made of the sky when they tried to push it into its blue silk cover. There is another blanket the natives make up north, very warm indeed. They make it out of camel whiskers. If I only had a little son I should make him one. It could not help but please a little boy to think he slept under camel whiskers.

From down below in the kitchen I got the pungent smell of smouldering peanut shells and the faint aroma of smoking ham. My cook was making one of his famous hams and as he worked he was singing the wildest falsetto chant. The coolies were cleaning somewhere in the house depths. I heard the faint

swish of water, and just now as I passed by the living-room windows, which stood all open to the garden, the clean smell of wax reached me. I looked inside to see the boy polishing my blackwood tables; I went in just to touch the satiny surfaces of the hand-finished wood and to look down at the tops of the tables, which glowed like dark pools. Each piece reminded me of the old man who had made them for me when we lived in Hangchow. Little and bent and dirty and old he was, but with the fingers of an artist.

And then there was the garden. A gardener in blue turban and blue apron bent over the strawberry beds. The head gardener worked alone transplanting chrysanthemum slips. No one but his highness was to be trusted with them. From plants that looked as like as two peas he selected the ones that should later grow gold and white blossoms. These he knew to be my favorites. And I went to work in an old fashioned border of zinnias and hollyhocks. Creation, work throbbed through every cell of the house and garden. And, excited with its pulsing, I forgot that other primal thing love which had broken the bounds of business integrity. Then Myra herself walked in through the gates at the foot of the garden that opens towards Yolosan, a frightened but determined looking Myra!

I took her on to the cool veranda to rest, but she never stopped talking until she had told it all. They

had deceived me and she supposed they had no right to, as they had been accepting our hospitality, but after all—defiance now crept into her voice—hadn't they a right to their own lives? Anyway they had been married when the "griffin" went down to Hankow to get her. They hadn't intended to do anything of the sort when he had asked me to entertain her, but when he came down and they thought of being definitely parted in a week they just couldn't bear it. They reasoned it would be far easier to live apart if they were married. They felt quite strong enough to keep their secret for two years! How could she know that marriage entirely changes a woman's viewpoint? that her need of a man's care by some strange perhaps inherited instinct becomes no longer just a desire but a necessity. She did not know she was going to develop this fierce need of protection.

They had meant that week with me to be their last time together for two years. She was going to join her friends and go on with her trip, and he was going to go on with his work. She had got as far as Shanghai. Then it was that she had lost all power of independence. She forgot every caution in her need to see him once more and tell him something that was very important to both of them. So she had planned, in her despair this reckless meeting right under the nose of the island people.

And now they both saw they couldn't see their defiance through. She couldn't face the coming of

their child alone, and he was in a panic at the very thought of parting from her now. Their defiance was gone, burnt out. After all, they needed us. Couldn't my husband and I beg a little mercy for them?

How powerless I was to explain, just as tongue-tied as I had been that first day with the "griffin." How was I to show her that we were all the servants of a great business and that they in serving two masters had broken faith. All the future of a much tried tradition of business in the East was at stake. Ten, a dozen, maybe twenty other young men felt themselves as much in love as these two. Shanghai and New York decided these things. Again my years of experience lay between us like a barrier. She could not believe that one with so much acquiescence had ever known adventure or daring.

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I mourn over the death of Pan. He and youth have indeed walked out of my house. And youth is so very scarce, so very precious out here. You who see it every day perhaps cannot conceive what it means to me to have seen it shattered. How can I make you understand about Myra and the "griffin," you whose personal and business lives are as separate as church and state? Perhaps you think it a farce, and that certainly nothing was said now that they were married. You forget about the other young men in the company who are waiting for their three

years to be up. Maybe you cannot understand that these rules of the company are the laws by which we live out here. Shanghai had but one answer; the "griffin" had broken his promise. His passage back to America awaited him. That's the price they paid for their wings, wings that are broken now.

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They left on the steamer this morning at dawn. I try now to forget them, to blot out that last vision of them. There always seems to be the same look about a man who has just been told that he is not wanted at his job. It seems to take from him his garment of self-respect. They always make me think of a woman who feels she has lost her virtue. Just so did the "griffin" look. But the contrast was too poignant, from that shining youth who came to us only a couple of months ago, to this man to whom we bade goodbye on the company launch last evening.

As our launch came alongside of the upriver steamer, and those two stepped from her, for the last time, down on the deck where the Chinese coolies under a great electric light were loading rice, the glare fell strong upon them. As they climbed the steep little stairs to the first-class cabins, it accentuated the defeated look about the "griffin," making him look almost shabby.

I turned away, for more than all I could not bear

to look at Myra. Life had come at her so suddenly. I had an instant's overpowering memory of her as she had been that first morning when almost like thistledown she had floated through the dark centre of the company house and out into the sunshine. Now she was climbing the ship's stairs with a bit of caution, for her young body had already taken on a slight heaviness that told of the extra weight she carried. Her whole outlook was a fierce maternalness which robbed her of her light-hearted youth. She felt a little vindictive, misused, defiant. Her one topic of conversation had been how they were to get along, for on one point the "griffin" had insisted—that they should not go to their families for help. And so they left their youth behind them, lost somewhere in those few weeks of hot experience here on this frontier of trade, and went forth, without joy, to meet the struggle of life.

I heard the boat at dawn blow its departing whistle and I turned to sleep, leaving to this company house to hide in the depths of its being another bit of company life.

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Evidently love is like trouble. It never comes singly. It appears to have taken possession of the house from parlor to kitchen. The cook did not return from market this morning, and the boy got us our tiffin. The amah asked to go home last evening, and

she also did not return this morning. And this afternoon, just as I ushered out the last caller who had come to hear about Myra and the "griffin," the cross old husband of the amah was brought in by the boy, and fell down before me knocking his head on the floor. Disliking him exceedingly, I commanded him to get up and await me in the kitchen.

"What does he want?" I asked the boy.

"Oh, honorable one," he interrupted, still knocking his head on the floor, "give me back my wife."

"Give him back his wife?" I said to the boy. "It is for him to bring her back to me." "She is my servant and you have kept her at home today, oh worthless one. It is for you to bring her back to me," I said to him directly, now filled full of my indignation. Then he wailed afresh and the boy translated. "That son of a dog, your cook, that barbarian, has stolen my wife. I do not want her, she has given me no sons, but he has made me 'lose face.'"

Then all flashed through my mind. How stupid I had been! Because my Darby and Joan were Chinese, I had not foreseen this elopement. But love appeared to be more agile than the conventions of any nationality.

"Get up," I commanded him, "and wait in the kitchen for the master." I felt my husband would have to handle this tragedy of the kitchen and it well might be a tragedy. The cook was a rank outsider to these Hunanese, which added greatly to his

crime of stealing the old man's pretty wife, and if he were not well away from Changsha the abused husband would find him and perhaps kill him. This strategy of having the old man wait for my husband would give the actor-cook a little more time. Thus on this high note of dramatic elopement did the actor-cook pass from our lives.



CHAPTER XXI

A YANGTSE VALLEY SUMMER

ONLY a few vivid impressions remain to me from those Yangtse valley summers. For the most part they are but a memory of the enervating, half-tropic heat which lulls my body into a kind of sloth within which my spirit retreats into meditation. Most of the women go to the summer resorts. Only a few of us who have no children, remain to make endurable for our husbands the long summers. In fact, most people flee from a Yangtse valley summer as from the plague, but I love them, love their eastern, half-tropic beauty. I love to watch the sun sink like a ball of fire behind Yolosan, and see the green island catch breath after the heat-throbbing day, see the leaves and flowers revive from the spent and drooping attitudes they have had under the pulsing, shimmering heat of the brilliant sunshine. I love to watch, too, the river, which has gleamed through the day like molten metal, at sunset, in the quiet water at the back of the island, turn black with the shadow of Yolosan.

The long, gray days of winter, the slow drip of the rain in the drainpipes through the spring, are over. My efforts of the winter to keep the house warm

and cozy are over. That creative pulse within me rests. I no longer feel that with my two hands I am drawing the walls of the house together, making them into a warm mantle of safety and peace. The vigorous work of keeping this big house's fireplaces aglow is over. And I, who feel always that the spirit of my house lives in the house fires, feel through the winter always the call of my hearths. But now my house becomes a benign, self-sufficing presence which ministers to me and not I to it, a sheltering presence like the shadow of a rock in a weary land.

Now, too, the long summer days and the hot nights bring the low ebb of the oil business. The Chinese sit until midnight in their courtyards without burning the precious oil. We wives no longer have to gird ourselves with fortitude for our husbands' up-country travel. I bask in the general well-being of this shared life of the company. The company people come and go on their vacations. Only at the "Installation" where the oil-tankers are unloading the winter supplies is there much activity.

I like the languid easy life of the white folks who remain. The strife and the striving dies a little out of the community life. In the general exhaustion we live more simply, a little more naturally. The community is small, the demands are few. I feel no touch on the hem of my garment. I have time to retreat into this meditation of spirit. My mind is acquiescent, takes the impressions of the life around it.

I watch fascinated. A strange thing happening within my garden—the daily encroachment of this half-tropic, eastern land. My high cement wall does not keep it out, neither do the great iron gates which are locked at night, neither do all my efforts hold it back. In the spring I made this white man's garden. The scent of hyacinth was in the air, and the sweet scent of English violets, and on their heels came the tall old fashioned pinks and reds of the hollyhocks, the cool blues of cornflowers and larkspurs. There was only one incongruous element in this white man's garden of the temperate zone. The growth, the blossoming, the death of each flower was premature. Violets which came in April at home, came in March, roses which should come in June often came in May, April daffodils in March and the summer hollyhocks, cornflowers, and larkspurs blossomed and died in early June. So did the summer vegetables crowd the season until when July came the plants of the temperate zone had come to fruition and passed into the autumn of their existence. My western garden was like a foolish virgin having spent her oil in the first watches of the night. The vegetables, the flowers after their voluptuous early fruition, like eastern women too soon quickened into creative life, withered and died and my loose garden soil in some mysterious way packed itself harder and harder into the packed earth of the courtyards of China. Indeed the East, to which this plot of earth belongs, has crept under

my wall, and taken unto itself its own. The gardener each morning sweeps its hard glazed surface as we of the West sweep a floor. And to take the place of the perfume of my western garden the dry dusty smell of the East has come into the air. So slight after all is the hold of our homesteading on this foreign land.

At night the house is filled full of the sounds of the East—impregnating its western atmosphere with the languor, the joy, the fear of the East. The tom toms, in a wayside shrine a few paces from my compound wall, beat and pound their barbaric rhythms into our sleep. The voices of the natives, like tumultuous waters, rise up to us from the packed hard courtyards where they sit for half the night. They penetrate our sleep, they penetrate every corner of the house.

And then the river. That perhaps is my most vivid impression. Never for one instant during the summer does it seem to be out of our thoughts. No longer does it lie a thin streak of water in the distance. From every window I can see it gleam and sparkle, and, at night, it reflects the lights of the city. The roof-garden of a Chinese hotel opposite in the city throws a great square of light across from the windows of the lookout room. Always the shouts and the cries of the river life drift through the open windows into the house.

No longer does the river empty itself quickly into

the Tung Ting Lake. That seemingly unfilled receptacle is at last filled by the great volume of water coming down from the upper Yangtse. Higher climbs the water-mark on the board in front of the Custom's office over on the mainland. Now we watch it with a new anxiety. Is this to be a flood year?

And always during the summer the shipping of oil is writ large across our horizon. Week in and week out now, the "Beautiful and Trustworthy" makes her two round trips a week to and from our "Installation" and back for supplies to Hankow. Not a moment is wasted. As she comes alongside the "Installation" the pumping begins. The shipping season is short. The eastern winter is long and lamps are alight early and kept burning through the night to scare off the evil spirits. Always there is the menace of the early low water-mark. No one can tell the length of the shipping. All trade, all life in the Yangtse Valley hang on the whims of the Yangtse.

A little idle I sit dreaming in my island house, as, my imagination caught by the picture of the tankers going back and forth and all the cities on the Yangtse, I think of the upper river. Here time presses as nowhere else. There are only twenty odd trips in a season. And what a journey each one is! In the light of early dawn specially-built tankers leave Ichang, plunging straight into the rapids of the first gorge. On they go through the "Wind Box" gorge, through others, others without a moment of

safety. All day shipwreck on the rocks threatens them. At night, anchored, the danger of bullets threatens them. Fifty thousand junkmen and trackers, who get their livelihoods from the hardships, privations, and dangers of primitive navigation on the Yangtse, look with suspicion upon the steamers. They see them only as monsters who would steal away their livelihood. Again the mixing of those dangerous chemicals, the fifteenth century of hand labor with the twentieth of machinery.

Faster, faster goes the shipping all up and down the Yangtse as the season advances. The sea-going tankers can come all the way to Hankow now to fill the great supply tanks, and our smaller river tankers hurry it away into the interior. We are a part, as is the dangerous upper Yangtse, in this pageant of tankers. And again I think of the skyscraper asleep in Lower New York while this her flotilla of tankers hurries up and down the Yangtse. This is a part of the romance hidden within that tall building which no one guesses as he passes, the romance of big business, the romance of America's foreign trade!

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Day after day, after five o'clock, what is left of the community sit on the club veranda, under the breeze from the *punkas*, drinking cool drinks. Day after day, at the back of the island, the river flows,

a flaming sheet. In the last half hour of the journey of the sun before it dips behind Yolosan it shines under my blue and white awnings into the blue quiet of my living-room. Day after day, upstairs, it lies in hot yellow masses across the beds. Even the lofty ceilings and the long French windows fail to alleviate the breathless sense of an intolerably brilliant blanket placed over the earth. Then comes the sun's sudden dip below Yolosan and the relief of its dark mass filling the sky and the long windows.

The brilliant procession of many such days mass themselves, in my memory, into one such day, more brilliant, more breathless than them all, the concentrated essence of them all. The sun had dipped below Yolosan, its dark mass filled the sky and the bedroom windows as I dressed for a dinner party over on the mainland. Still I gasped under the breathless heat that was as if the sun had sucked the earth of air.

My thin dress as I went down the path felt as heavy as flannel under the small exertion of walking. Even the wind around the moving launch was more like a hot puff from a furnace, coming up to us where we sat relaxed in our long chairs, hearing the hum of Changsha grow in volume as we neared the bund. We passed among the thronging people who had come out on to the wide top of the river wall for air. Some had even brought their beds. Our chairmen shouted and elbowed their way among them and then with a gasp we are in the hot tunnel streets.

Like some island of bliss in the midst of purgatory was the place where we went to dinner. First, out of the heat and intolerable squalor of the city, with infinite dignity there loomed up a gray stone church. Set within its tiny enclosure, it speaks as much of meditation and prayer as its gray stone counterparts in the city of New York. And just beyond, in its more closely walled enclosure, is the stucco and timbered rectory, housing just now for the summer the vice-consulate of America. Thus do the triune of American activities in China—religion, government, and business meet, a tiny nucleus of western life in the midst of this throbbing old East.

As we sat in the dining-room, even above the whirring electric fans and the talk of life's amenities—books, dress, position, an actor or two pictured in *Vanity Fair*—the bare unadulterated acts of living which is the East, hammered relentlessly at our consciousness. In this heat, with all the windows wide open, and all the city masses belched forth from the airless huts, it broke over the wall of this compound with far greater force than on the island. The voices of human beings bent on the great business of being born, dying, and pushing food into their bellies, intruded into the privacy of that smiling, graceful dinner party. The guttural sounds of men eating with the ravenous haste of animals, the reek of rancid oil being thrown into hot and unclean frying pans with the raw flesh of animals, a whiff now

and then of decaying garbage, the heavy odor of burning joss-sticks offered to countless gods, the mingled wail of uncounted infants, the groans of the sick or the heavy laden come over the wall from the city. Can you believe that we are used to it, we, who came from the Main Streets of America, that we do not notice that towards twelve o'clock this struggling life of China subsides a little and leaves the rectory in peace?

As we went out to take our chairs, we only said, "What a lovely night." Out of the velvety quiet in the compound we rode in our chairs. Then suddenly all this East that had attended us vaguely at the dinner party broke violently. In the unquiet, troubled sleep of the city we moved. Sleep, did I call it, this throttled moment in the city life?

To the accompaniment of the pat of our chairmen's feet, and the hollow ricocheting sound of loose paving stones under their tread I rode appalled, as if I were an unrightful listener at the keyhole of the mysteries of life, the things that should be hidden in the awful mysteries of our evolution. The streets were narrow, just that paved path between the cave-like dwellings of the people which hugged those arteries of communications, which encroached upon them with the encumbrances and the filth of too much living like spawn, as I told you, careless and wasteful of the individual. The shutters of each shop were closed thus making those shop-houses like



*THE narrow streets were encroached upon
by the encumbrances of living.*

kennels without air or a glimpse of the majesty of the sky. Here and there, where one was just being closed, we caught glimpses of a bed curtained with dirty cloth, standing in a dark corner. From these shuttered harborers of humanity came the half stifled groans of uneasy sleep, the rebellious wails of children not yet tamed to pain and misery, the spitting of men. Here and there, where we nearly tread upon them, human beings lay stretched before us in some terrible facsimile of death. One, with no craving for privacy, lay there with his bare, fat and unclean trunk across the arm of a chair. And all around lay the tools by which these people existed as if there had not been a moment to prepare for this sleep which had stolen upon them like a thief. Hunger, misery, thirst, sickness, death clamored at the heels of this sleep. They had pushed them back with work, work, dropped only when they were overtaken with sleep. There were their tools ready to their hands when they should wake. Hasten, grasp them before another more miserable human being has stolen life from you. There is not room for pity or beauty or cleanliness among China's millions. Not only the living but unborn generations hurry upon the heels of those that now lie all around us in this counterfeit of death. Death himself will take toll of many of them this hot night. Yet even realizing all this, as I rode there in my chair, I could not help but feel an awful beauty all around me. In those dusty corners

of the streets where sat old men in meditation or occasionally tending fruit stands, their faces, upon which life had etched all these things, showing patience and contentment. In those dark interiors, I caught glimpses of high lights of color in crudely painted idols, in some hand-made, wooden dipper or bowl.

Then again my brain reeled with the onslaught of this primitive life that is not mitigated for me with the activities of the days when these same men do smile and appear, in their own way, to be bent on pleasure. All I could think of was that for thousands of years this city had slept like this through summer after summer, through the bleak nights of winter, and the wet nights of spring.

I felt faint with the appalling sense of the relentless repetition of life, when suddenly those streets gave way before the bund. There was the river speaking of peace, and there was the sky and the stars speaking of dignity, and across, under the moon and among the trees, stood our tall Western house. I should attend with more loving care than ever its Western ideals.

Only one other impression remains to me of those quiet, uneventful months. The junks clustered around the Japanese gunboat, which told us that the anti-Japanese feeling had not died down. Until late in July they stood there. When they were gone, the rumors began increasing that Hunan was working

herself up for more strife, internal strife, a kind of civil war. But it remained so hot we felt certain not even the Hunanese would fight. He does nothing under duress of extremes of temperatures or under the discomfort of rain. However, it gave us something to talk about at the club in the afternoon.



CHAPTER XXII

ANOTHER BRIDE

I WONDER if this is the gift the East has made to me, this gift of recuperation in meditation. The East understands acquiescence and meditation of spirit. So, unashamed, I had dreamed through the summer, getting a resurrection of energy from it. It was well, for Hunan was indeed buckling on her clanging armor of strife and the shared life of the corporation frontiersmen was again to make its insistent demands upon me.

It was only August and not the end of the heat when this shared life brought need of renewed activities. We were to add a new member to our staff. My husband told me one noon when he came home for his "tiffin." He had been advised of it in a letter that had come that morning in the company mail from Shanghai. There had been a company house vacant since early June and now it was to be occupied.

"Who is coming?" I asked eagerly. I entertain always a secret hope that one of these shifts will bring back to me one of the interrupted company friendships, bring back some company person I have known in another port, my friendship with whom has been sharply broken off by transfer or home-leave. But never yet has the turn of the corporation

wheel brought back to me one of these. And this was to be no exception. Neither in friendships or homes or home towns does the wife of the pioneer trader ever have a chance to take root.

As usual these were strangers to us, a young man back from his first "home-leave," bringing with him his bride. From disappointment I slipped quickly to interested wondering. This was to be a new experience for me in company life. Never before had I witnessed the coming of a company bride. In Newchwang I had been the company bride so I was no onlooker to that woman's adjustments, in Antung we were the only company people (it was a "one-man" station); in Hangchow there had only been room for ourselves and bachelors. Thus far all my knowledge of company women had been very meagre. I had come into the company, when as I said, women were not popular. My experience had been with the sturdy old-timers like "the boss" of Manchuria, and with the young company bachelors. The women I had known were women already settled into harness, women who had succeeded, senior women in the company, whom I met as we passed through their husbands' stations en route to ours, and one junior woman who had been in this city of the Long Sand when we came, a plucky independent woman who had lived in the house these two were now to occupy. And of course there were the short annals of Myra.

And now I was to witness the typical beginning

of company women. To give me some inkling of what her reaction would be, I had only my own memory of such a beginning, those first months in Newchwang nine years ago this month, which, even now, have about them some poignancy of experience which nothing else has ever had.

Despite the difficulties of those early days, in memory there hangs around them a sort of splendor which make them unreliable, I feel, as illuminators of this bride's first feelings.

This for me was the breath-taking dramatic moment in foreign trade for it was the moment that comes in all pioneer movements, the moment that, as a woman, I am most interested in, the moment when a woman holds its success in the hollow of her hand. The man's coming back from "home-leave" signifies he has won out or else he would not have been returned. Now he enters the second stretch with his and the company's future again at stake—this time in the hands of a woman. All depends on the amount of bravery and sense of adventure she brings to bear on this pioneering. And this moment had come to our station. In a symbolic sense I felt the whole life of the company, the life of America's foreign trade, was on the young shoulders of that bride who would come in on the up-river steamer which was due at the Butterfield dock that afternoon between two and four.

That was the symbolic importance of her coming.

In reality it mattered only to her husband whether she succeeded or not, I was thinking, as I sat under the awning of my sampan en route to the other company house unoccupied for the last two months. With unseeing eyes I smiled at the babies leaning out of the windows of the great junks to see the foreign woman, for I was thinking that modern industry and corporation business had built a new type of man. I was jealous for a new type of woman, less personal than wives had been in the past, a woman who saw herself as a part of a movement, a woman, who, like the corporation man, could sink individuality in co-operation, who, in short, had enthusiasm for teamwork. After all, fundamentals of business and religion offered much the same discipline. In business as in religion "he that would save his life must lose it." What preparation, I wondered, had this young woman who was coming to grasp at one and the same moment her great importance and her entire insignificance?

The bumping of my sampan recalled me to the things of the moment. Into this other company house I went trying to survey it as far as possible through the eyes of the new bride. In such fashion I surveyed it with consternation. Devoid of the personalities of its old occupants, who had cast over it the spell of a very buoyant comradeship, it slumbered behind its closed blinds in its true character, a poor and mean object. This "number two" house of the com-

pany was an old one rented from the Catholic mission. Against its crudely painted walls and woodwork the company furniture, already scarred, as was mine, with the battle of other people's lives, and stamped by the impersonal hand of business, stood in forlorn groups. All the crudities and blemishes of the house smote me vividly as the caretaker threw wide the blinds. I saw that about it in those months it had stood empty there had crept the certain if indefinable atmosphere of the East which, no matter how much we may like the East, we all are at such pains to keep out of our homes. It's like the encroachments of the jungle on a clearing. Leave it for a day and the jungle takes one step towards stifling it. So in this alien atmosphere—leave your home-making for a day and the alien life has intruded upon it ever so little. That is why I tend my home so constantly.

Now as I stood here looking at this house so soon to confront this American bride I felt those jungle encroachments. There hung over the rooms the unmistakable musty smell of the Orient. The caretaker had pushed the chairs and tables into the conventional grouping in China houses. From near at hand the beating of tom toms rose in monotonous, wearying repetition, echoing and re-echoing through those unoccupied rooms, setting the house throbbing to the rhythm of fear and idol worship. Roots of the jungle of alien life taking root in the company house. May she who has taken upon herself this business of

homesteading in the interests of America's foreign trade come endowed with the imagination and the courage and the spirit of adventure of America's pioneers, I made my wish as I gave some final instructions to the caretaker.

At four the steamer was in sight. As I went across river in the launch, I strained my eyes to see the company bride on the deck for first-class passengers, the forward deck. Just as we came alongside the little steamer casting anchor, I saw my husband coming down the bund, bent on the same errand as I. Only he wanted to see his new man, I wanted to see the power behind his new man.

Amidst the usual commotion of landing, the rush of the coolies, the shouldering of bundles and babies by the Chinese steerage I watched for her appearance. Had they come? Was I to find the companionship I craved in this new company woman? Was I to find inspiration in the vividness of her youth? Thrilling moment! There she came with her husband down the steep stairs from the first class, down the steep stairs where I had last watched Myra ascending. My heart gave a painful leap at the thought. Here was a bride beginning with every chance in her favor. What a success Myra would have made with such a chance, for after all Myra was all pioneer at heart.

Then my interest centered entirely on this new bride who was now making the step between steamer and launch. She was so perfectly a picture of fashion

that she seemed odd and startling even a little artificial in this far-away Chinese setting. Something in her disdainful attitude made me feel she already felt herself wasted. It was like a parade with no onlookers. People living in the interior lose their feeling for the small nuances of style. Thus, much of her correctness I realized I no longer had the woman's sixth sense of dress to appreciate. And there was no other person to appraise her except my husband and, as he steadied her in that awkward step across from steamer to company launch, he was rating her inner capacities. Already, I saw, he was realizing that with her lay the battle. In that first moment before she had had time to hide her real self behind the woman's mask of a smile I saw that he had caught, as had I, an angry, anguished look in her eyes. Then the bright veil of her smile hid her from us, and she and I were greeting each other with the conventional courtesies existing between older and younger women. After that she was absorbed in the count of their trunks which our sailors were loading from the steamer on to the launch. I knew then I was separated from her by my experiences as I had been from Myra. And so we came to the company house, my own big house, for she was not to be tested on her own until morning. Good old company house, it took us all unto itself making no distinction between those of experience and those without it.

* * * * *

That was two weeks ago. Of the battle that goes on between those two personalities shut up in that other company house I catch only snatches. I saw of course that devastating rebellion of the company bride when we all went down to her house the next morning, and she looked upon the task which confronted her. Evidently it was the first time life had ever presented her with a problem, and I must say she received this first gift of experience most ungraciously. Her beautiful clothes, her parent's home, even her entertainments had all been made for her. She gave but one quick and scorching glance at the living-room and dining-room and refused to go farther. She collapsed into a chair with angry tears in her eyes. She blamed her husband, she blamed the company. Somehow, despite all the young husband had told her, she had brought out with her, and kept it intact to that moment a vision of her first home: ivory wicker, blue and rose cushions, hardwood floors, blue Chinese rugs, blue and white kitchen and of course white-tiled bathrooms. Where she got such an idea I cannot imagine unless it was from the same source that Babbit's son got his idea that business in China meant sitting in a "compound" with his feet on a desk. This house awoke within her not a single creative emotion, only resentment that her husband and the company should expect so much of her. My husband and I did not entirely escape. We too came in for some of her resentment.

Her husband was late to the office that first afternoon. This woman he had taken to be his helpmeet had refused to eat any of their first meal in their first home which her staff of servants (springing up in China like grass from the ground a few minutes after your arrival) had prepared. She had cried hysterically until he had actually promised that he would ask for a transfer to a larger port and a better house. Away from her, my husband had succeeded in making him see that such a step would be suicidal to his career. Indeed away from his wife's devastating rebellion he knew, as well as my husband did, that each man in this foreign trade must go through the treadmill of successive posts. On the frontier of foreign trade that meant that none could shirk their share of the interior. To ask it was for a man to show the white feather, to grant it would have been for the company to weaken the pioneering instinct which made us effective. Ours was a shared, a mutual life which allowed of no exceptions. Sickness and death often stalked among us and forced enough exceptions to the rules.

“It ain't the individual
Nor the army as a whole;
But the everlasting teamwork
Of every blooming soul.”

It was at tea-time as we sat in the blue coolness of our living-room that my husband and I talked it over.

"The trouble is," said my husband, "that he is too easy with her. He should insist that she cannot interfere with his work."

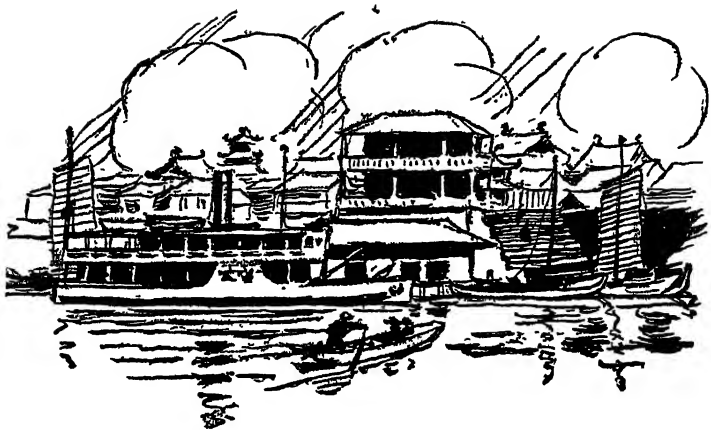
"Hardly modern," I murmured, "to take the masterful hand."

"Um," he responded grimly, "hardly modern to use the feminine appeal of tears. I had got the impression that the modern girl believed in taking things standing up."

My husband had won in the argument. I had nothing more to say. I owned myself beaten. I sipped my cold tea, and began again in my mind the old perplexing problem of the woman's part out here. Perhaps women at home were settling it better. At home one's interest might lie in two directions. Strength here lay in oneness. In contemplative mood I went out and paced my garden paths. "This job takes co-operation," I said to myself. "Oil for the Lamp," I murmured. There was symbolic meaning in those words. Women were the oil which fed the flame of accomplishment here in the East. Our husbands were the vessels through which we found expression.

If this company bride could not content herself with this teamwork it meant frustration for one of them. She would beat the wings of her youth away, or else break her man's spirit. Was she going to refuse to find happiness in the sturdy qualities of homemaking, refuse to dip back into the experiences of her

race, the experiences of America's pioneer women, and build up this frontier of America's trade as they had the middle west and that very Illinois city from which she, a young bride who wept in the face of her first problem in homemaking, had come? Were money and leisure softening the sturdy fibre of America's pioneer women?



CHAPTER XXIII

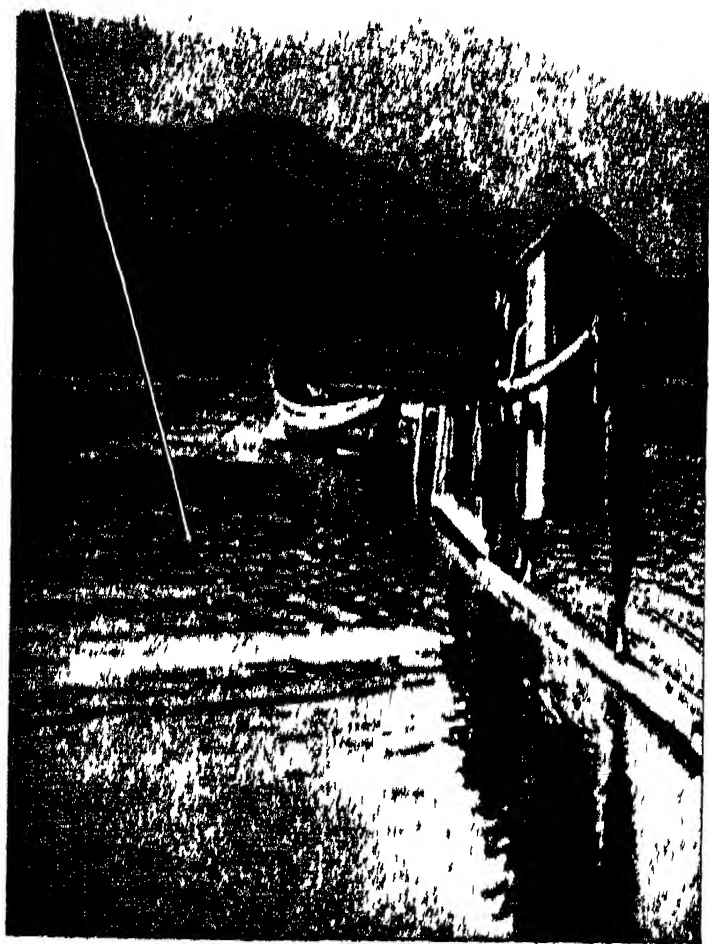
THE MONTH OF WAR AND CHRYSANTHEMUMS

AND then suddenly the bride and I and all Hunan were swept up into the excitement of war. Suddenly, with the autumn, came war. And yet war probably had come no more suddenly than autumn, which came almost at the appointed moment. On the fifteenth of August, although the days were as hot as before, there was a new quality in the night air. Up in back of the island and over the west veranda where we slept the coolness came nightly now. The garden began to lose that dry Eastern look. A couple of light rains and the grass showed green again and the pots upon pots of chrysanthemums put forth the tiniest of green buds.

As for war, it had been moving slowly upon us

just as had the autumn. But we had lived in China through most of the years of its turbulent democracy and, now, after witnessing many false starts, refused to entertain the idea of war until it was upon us. One learns in the East to control emotions and excitements. And had we not lived in Hunan, the hot-bed of rebellion, for over a year, and had anything happened? War had indeed been in the air all summer but nothing had occurred. With our own languor upon us, we had all agreed that the anti-Japanese excitement would probably suffice for the salt of strife without which Hunan appeared to find the bread of life scarcely worth eating. Little spurts of hatred on the part of the people in the city had kept the Japanese women and children on junks huddled round their gunboat, like chickens round a mother hen, until well into July. But so inured to such things had we become that after a week or two we had accepted it as a matter of course—in fact did not notice the change the first day that the junks disappeared from around the Japanese gunboat.

So, although the rumors of war persistently kept coming in from foreigners who thought they knew and from Chinese who were supposed to have their fingers on the pulse of Hunan, we continued to prepare for our yearly vacation, a trip to Peking. If one waited in China until there were no rumors of war or bandits or pestilence one would never do anything. We might just as well stay at home because the



*THE river separated us from the bandit-
inclined army of Tsai.*

Yellow River bridge, across which our train had to pass, was reputed to be unsafe, or because, along certain sections of the line, there was talk of bandits preparing to wreck the trains. That kidnapping of a whole train full of our business comrades was still a vivid memory in our minds. However, we decided to take all the chances.

But we had no more than traveled the dusty and hot miles to Peking than civil war did actually burst upon Hunan. Exciting tales of Changsha captured and looted flew around the capital. All my husband's thoughts leaped immediately to those oil tanks, that great storage place of oil. These were at all times our first concern. Of course, he could do no more, if looting really began, than his staff was doing at that very moment, namely, just looking on. But in the final analysis his was the responsibility and he wanted to get on the ground in the shortest possible time. If he were going to be there I wanted to be there too. Also I must own that now that war had really started we were actuated by our incurable spirit of adventure. We wanted to see what was going on. So we reversed the dusty miles back to Hankow, taking our chances on getting accommodations on the Changsha river steamers. This was the time of year when every man, woman, and child was trying to get home from the summer resorts to their posts all up and down the Yangtse, and you engaged your passage weeks, yea even months ahead, and we were off schedule.

By luck we got passage the first night on an extra boat put on the run to Changsha. All was excitement and conjecture on board the little steamer. Some of the women were staying behind in Hankow, all the men were as eager as schoolboys to see what was happening. Little children were staring round-eyed at the discussions of their parents. Everyone was trying to assume an outward garment of bravado. At ten, with last calls of good luck to friends and the wives remaining behind, the steamer slipped her moorings.

As we sailed out into the dark Yangtse I began to feel a peculiar heretofore unfelt affection for Hankow. It was our last touch with any massed quantity of our own civilization. Standing by my husband on the narrow deck, I stared eagerly out for a last glimpse of such sane and safe looking things as its tall office and bank buildings revealed in the white bands thrown by the searchlights from the American destroyer squadron standing by in the river. I must confess I relinquished these signs and seals of our own civilization a trifle reluctantly for the darkness of the unlit river ahead, and the uncertainty of Hunan, a mixture of bandits, war, and democracy. Strange, contradictory, inconsistent Hunan, forever flaunting her banners of freedom alongside of bits of autocratic force, where at this very moment one general fought against another because of jealousy and because each wanted to "squeeze"

for himself the opium revenue of the illegitimate opium trade. Freedom indeed with each general forcing upon the patient and unresisting people such a war.

The present governor with his army of professional soldiers of the lowest type was trying to hold his own against one of his men whom he had sent down to the Kweichow border to collect revenue from Kweichow opium coming down the border river. This general in time had been able to buy up these professional soldiers who fought for pay and now he refused to turn over the tax money. Furthermore, he had succeeded in enlisting the interests of the Komin-tang, the radical wing of the national party. He now fought for the tax money, and to overthrow his old master's power, and to connect up Hunan with the southern government whose headquarters were in Canton, proud Hunan who neither swore allegiance to north or south. Steadily but surely our boat was taking us into this. A strange warfare for us. We should be in it because our work and our homes lay within the radius of this strife, but not partakers in its policies though possibly partakers in its bullets and lawlessness.

Early the next morning we entered the Tung Ting Lake where even then in September the waters were beginning to recede from the foot of the pagoda. This was the first sign of our winter isolation when we should be shut away once more to ourselves.

Hankow now slipped away from me into some only half remembered, former existence. Already we were being received into the excitements and uncertainties of war, and they set us apart from those not experiencing them as sorrow sets one apart from the happy. After we crossed the lake we began to see earthworks on the shore and out of them occasionally came shots. One hit the steamer. Then the high pitch of excitement among some of the women cracked on the edge of hysteria. But everyone continued to be gay—knitted, played games with the children in the shelter of the armor plate and declared they were not the least bit frightened. It's a part of our code out here to take our dangers lightly. I thought of our young bride in Changsha. How was this excitement and danger acting upon the gordian knot of her domestic problems?

On the second day about noon the boat stopped at the pottery village to load rice and there, coming towards us in the distance, we saw the company launch. Now we should know what had happened. Impatiently we watched it pull alongside. Splendid, there was my husband's assistant standing on its deck.

"Everything all right," he called out. "Changsha has been vacated by Chao's army, occupied by Tsai's for a night, and evacuated by Tsai and re-occupied by Chao. No looting of foreign property during it all." He came quickly aboard, and we all besieged him with questions.

"How about the 'Installation'?" cut in my husband. "Fine," he answered. We breathed more easily.

In half an hour we were off on our own launch taking with us the Changsha passengers upon whom business or anxiety pressed. The remainder waited until the big boat made the rest of its journey.

And so again we came slowly up the river, came again to the outposts of Changsha, the British Oil Company godowns on the right side and on the left side a quarter of a mile farther those of our great American Oil Company with the water flowing in a large sheet around the pontoon and under the bridge. Impregnable looked the tall, gray tanks, and the long slanting roofs of the godowns, so strong was the fortified appearance of the place. In reality, how vulnerable they were! Only the strong gates and a not-to-be-counted-upon respect for foreign property guarded them.

Again in the distance we saw the bunding of the city, the river now high upon its bunding wall. Again with a little foreboding I surveyed it. Again as we moved upon it the gray, sprawling mass on the top took on the familiar details of gray, tile roofs, white, windowless walls and dark tunnel-like streets which burrowed away into the city's heart. We were again in our home town! Its lethargic people as before moved on the wide and dirty promenade on the top of the river wall, and that ceaseless, endless line, the human water system, carried dripping pails

of water up the refuse-covered steps from the river. The only sign of war was the larger number of foreign gunboats standing by in the river.

The island lay thin and vulnerable to our right there in the middle of the river and directly between the two armies. A gun went off. "All same every evening," said the laodah in a removed sort of way, as if these fighters were no more related to him than they were to us.

Now we took sampan for that vulnerable island, climbed the steps of our garden embankment, and passed within the great iron gates of our compound. Lo, there lay our garden before us caught up into the peace of a September idyl. The chrysanthemums which now lined the walk between the pyramid evergreens had put out large clusters of green buds. The old gardener, on a stool three inches wide, sat among them whispering to himself and picking off the extra buds as he tied their long drooping stems to neat bamboo sticks. We walked between them straight down the path to the iron gates that opened out on the river to the back of the island. We opened the two great halves. We looked across to the sacred mountain of Yolosan taking on its first autumn tints. But we faced more than Yolosan. We faced Tsai's army, a bandit-inclined soldiery who had entrenched themselves in its depth; only the rapidly receding water at the back of the island separated us. At the front gates of our compound we had faced



*I*N September the chrysanthemums lined the walk.



*I*N June the river came swiftly sweeping over our embankments.

Chao's army entrenched in the city. His advance guard also held the island. Looking out of the gate where we stood there at the back of the island we could see a hastily built trench touching elbow with the end of our garden wall. In it one of that paid soldiery drowsed, his gun resting on the earthworks pointed towards Yolosan.

Thus were we surrounded by this lowest type of soldiery, by two armies who fought for dollars and cents, each of which, if their leader were defeated, might break through discipline and begin looting. Such soldiers held the city on one side of us and men of like temper held Yolosan, which overlooked us, and they were all around us in the trenches which touched elbow with our garden walls.

As we went to bed that night, undressing in the dark so as not to draw fire to our upstairs windows, Yolosan seemed to fill the whole of our long French window except for a point of evening sky and a star, and Yolosan filled our minds. As we lay listening, at haphazard intervals the guard in the trench at our garden's edge fired and our room seemed to burst in two. What was going on in the dark? Was the opposing army attempting to cross, or a single spy? Was it simply that that ill-drilled soldier in the trench had waked up in a panic, and in panic fired?

I lay there unable to sleep, filled with that strange new excitement. I had never been in war before or felt this sudden intensifying by danger of all my

perceptions. Excitement and danger had accentuated the beauty of the garden that afternoon and the peace and order in our living-room when we had entered it a little later. The clink of silver and china at tea, the ordinary everyday activities of the house, had penetrated my consciousness with new and vivid appeals of beauty. And there had been that moment at the club just before dinner when a shot hit the tennis post and all the foreigners seemed pulled together in some heretofore inexperienced strong union and sympathy, bound about by this danger and excitement, hemmed in by a war of which we were not a part, a war the movements of which were as mysterious to us as the minds of the Orientals among whom we were passing our lives.

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The next morning I went down the island to our other company house and found it shaken out of its accustomed morning torpidity. Our little bride met me, and about her too I felt that same sort of intensification by excitement that I had seen in every person since my return and for the first time she seemed almost happy. Perhaps this excitement was going to stir her out of that lethargy of mind and body, which had come upon her since the outside stimulus of American gaiety had had to be given up. "It is strange," I mused, "salvation comes to us through novel channels in this Eastern setting."

I felt too that queer union with her that I had felt with all the others at the club the evening before. At least for the time we two American women, wives of America's business representatives in the East, had come a little closer together, even if it were only through the excitement of this war over opium. Fortunately her feeling of disdain for all Chinese kept her from any realization of danger to herself. We parted happily at the gate, she promising with an air of delight to come in for dinner that evening. The idea of going out in the dark with the guns going off as they did each evening, seemed to give her a kind of childish pleasure. Thrills had heretofore been her portion, albeit through the movies. That was one of the lacks which made her resentful of this life abroad. Now she awoke to the call of excitement in this new form.

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One, two, three weeks passed in a kind of opera-bouffe war with jagged points of real alarm and danger jutting out of it. In the main this war consisted in elaborate innuendoes delivered in pomp and style by Chao to Tsai and Tsai to Chao. This war of words promised to go on endlessly, and yet any day either general might puncture the self-complacency and the self-composure of the other, make him "lose face." Then this palaver would end in a moment either in battle and all the bloody vengeance of the

Oriental or the face-losing army would simply collapse and retreat some sunny morning.

In the meantime, over in the city the big shops never took down their night shutters, rich men fled or lay in hiding. All feared the officers who walked or rode through the streets carrying the red paddles of life or death, under the power of which they commandeered rice and money. None dared say them nay, from the luckless, well-to-do Mr. Chen of whom they demanded his hundreds and who had solved his difficulties by asking for leave to go to Hankow on business, down to the clerk in the office who came in sighing over the loss of his rice bowls, which had been rudely snatched by a soldier as they sat at breakfast that morning. Those who did, like the traitors whom the red paddles searched out down dark alleys, were in danger of being marched to the open space near the Customs house where the executioner stood with a long knife to behead them. To such high-handed democracy the city bowed patiently. Governors to them resembled kings, for who could gainsay them their power? So with Oriental nonchalance the moving populace stopped a moment for the gala event of execution and, going away afterwards, kicked the encumbering bloody head from their path.

In the meantime, the undisciplined and ignorant troops in both armies made use of this interval of waiting to fire upon each other and upon us. They

took aim at our launches when our men were on their way to their offices, they fired at our houses or our dark figures if we moved against the horizon. All flags but their own they put down to the enemy. Thus they reduced their duties to simplicity and multiplied our danger.

Each day as the palaver continued we, on our island, watched the river going. A little more accessible each day that falling water made us to the opposing army of Tsai on Yolosan, an army somewhat less disciplined than Chao's men who held the city and the island, somewhat less careful about firing upon us, somewhat more likely to loot if they once got on to the island. Day after day we watched that shrinking river taking with it our one highway to Hankow, our one highway to the outside world and peace, leaving us behind to our isolation and to stew in the fat of Hunan's civil war. We had left as means of communication that dilapidated railway which now existed only for the military and the mails.

At last came the day when the steamers, which until now had come armored from Hankow, failed to arrive. Gone from the river were the vermilion and black smokestacks, gone were the whistles of incoming and outgoing steamers, the noise of their anchor chains raising or lowering the anchors. Our isolation was completed. The bands of sand again encircled us, separating us from our brother white

men in China, binding us to that soldiery on Yolo-san.

The old familiar static waves of sand tied us at the back of the island to the mainland and to Tsai's army. At the front the boats again stood far away on the thin line of the river. From my lookout window the winter's breadth of sand again confronted me. But now as I watched my husband tread the path still too new to be distinct, I watched him with anxiety for this was now a perilous journey from path to jetty, to sampan, to launch, for the path, the jetty, the sampan, the launch were exposed to fire. I knew too that his day would be full of perils since the office was also exposed to fire. A chance shot or two had already entered through its windows; the launch, despite all the promises of the generals, was fired upon regularly on its trip to the "Installation."

From the last glimpse of him I turned as always to my house, but it too bore the stamp of this civil war. My living-room no longer stood all open to the sun. It had taken on the aspect of a thing besieged. It looked vault-like and gray behind its barricaded windows; it smelled of damp sand and the musty hemp of gunny sacks which we had had to stack man-high in front of the windows to protect ourselves from the chance shots that already had hit the trees in the garden and the pillars of the veranda. Only when I took the risk of standing on tiptoe and looking over the barricades could I see into my sunny

garden where the chrysanthemum buds were taking on gold and yellow and catch a glimpse of Yolosan in its autumn tints with gossamer autumn clouds fanning out from its top. In the hall, that common passageway of the house, stood a red lantern, signal of distress, given us by our gunboat to be run up our flagpole in case some night the soldiers of either side hid behind our strong walls and drew fire upon us, or in case either army broke discipline and began looting.

It was at this point when our isolation was complete that Chao, the recognized governor, sent our consuls word that it would be wise for us to evacuate, that he could no longer guarantee our safety. Our consuls replied in formal but polite manner that such a step was impossible. They did not give the obvious reason, the low water of the river and that our gunboat "no could walkee." That might have put us in the embarrassing position of refusing transportation over the decrepit railway, refusing it because our position would have indeed been precarious on one of those trains, out of communication with our gunboat, given over to the care of those soldiers who, even as we went up and down the river on our despatch launches, sniped at us from their trenches. But there was a yet deeper reason for not going. Property, business interests, homes, bade us stay and guard what was in our care. Thus we only asked of the governor that he give us protection against

wanton shooting by his entrenched army. The risks of war we took upon ourselves. That was a part of our day's work.

And that was that. We continued to go about the ordinary affairs of island life and to forget we were shut in to the whims of these armies. The code of white men in the East demanded that we take our dangers in light-hearted fashion. Panic in danger is the unforgivable sin of these tiny white men's communities. In this case it did not seem hard to be brave. There is, I discovered, an excitement in the whine of bullets that raises a bit of the dare-devil in most men and women. As I have said before, most men answer "here am I" to the call of adventure. It was some months later that we were to have another experience which tested more severely this code among white men, when we were to know a more sinister type of danger in the face of which it was more difficult to keep up the morale of light-heartedness.

Four, five weeks—September, October. A sunny Saturday afternoon with the tennis court as hard as a billiard table. All our little white world was bent on pleasure. We were getting accustomed to our background of soldiers and chance bullets. I was making ready for a tennis party. It was three o'clock; the servants were arranging chairs in the summer house. The white cloth on the tea-table, the glass and silver, despite our barricaded windows, gave us as domestic an air as any lawn party in America.

No hint of trouble stirred the autumn day. This war, we had concluded, was a farce.

Suddenly into that autumn peace there fell the sharp report of guns. Yolosan at last spoke. All along the island from one sandy tip to the other the rifles were going off and the machine guns banging rat-a-tat-tat. Shrapnel from Yolosan fell on the island and sang through the air en route to the mainland and Changsha. The thing had happened at last! Tsai's army was attempting to cross! They had funk'd all the mist-shrouded nights, all the foggy, protective mornings and chosen three o'clock on a brilliant afternoon.

We hung far out of an upstairs window trying to see. On they came across the sand, that untrained, ignorant army, who felt safer when they could see, like children hunting burglars with a light. A third of the way across that stretch of sand they had come with the guns popping ahead of them and the bullets falling among them. Into the general din fell the shrieks of the sirens of the Villalobos and the Japanese gunboat. Ah, it was good to hear the familiar voice of the Villalobos calling its men to our defense. Looting by a retreating army threatened us. Looting by a victorious army threatened us. Rat-a-tat-tat went the machine guns, a bullet grazed the veranda. Harder came the fire. Silence. Tsai's men had turned and fled back over the sand. Their morale had broken. Whose would not, marching straight

on to meet a gun without a rise of ground large enough even to cover their feet, only the yards of gleaming sand against which they stood out like huge target-practice symbols.

An ominous hush fell over the island, the river, the city, Yolosan. Not a sign of life appeared on the river; not a figure, not a junk, not a sampan moved; not a person appeared on the stretches of sand at the front of the island except where servants hurriedly filled a few more sandbags, close under our and the British-American Tobacco Company's garden walls. Then we saw two sampans start from the other shore and make for the Villalobos—sailors back from shore leave.

We walked round the house, restless under the ominous quiet. The cook smiled at me with superior calm from the kitchen window, saying "More better not make sandwiches." That seemed to be his only reaction to this excitement kicked up by these war lords from whom he, like the laodah on that first day of our return, appeared as removed as we.

"More better make," I answered. I was none too sure but that under the code of the island some venturesome souls would come in for tea if not for tennis. "Just little," he replied with another smile which meant surely the white man would not knock his foolish ball today.

Then again the guns tore up the silence and again we rushed to the upstairs windows to see that plucky,



THESE beautiful Chinese palaces were crumbling from lack of care

if foolhardy, army of Tsai's making another rush for the island. Guns went off, bullets whined through the air, and down below we heard a huge hammering upon our gate. Could it be Chao's men trying to get into our compound to fortify themselves behind our walls? We hurried down to see, only to behold, coming up between the pyramid evergreens, six sweating, toiling American sailors with Lewis guns.

"Captain sent us," said their leader, lowering his heavy gun and jerking off his cap. "We'd like to get on that there upstairs veranda of yours and get ready. We'll have to fire on 'em if they try to get in."

With heavy tread they went up the stairs. One looked around to say with a grin, "They're awful silly. Ain't even got a pebble to hide behind."

"How about the other company people?" asked my husband.

"Better bring 'em in here" said the leader of the sailors. "We don't want to spread ourselves out any more than we have to tonight. Got too many places over in the city to protect." So my husband and one of the sailors started out after the company bride and her husband.

In the meantime we prepared for darkness which was only two hours away. "You see," I said to the cook, "the sandwiches are necessary. We shall have our tea-party after all—at least seven hungry sailors." Rat-a-tat-tat outside, and that advancing army.

Inside, sailors stacked guns in the hall and erected barricades on the upstairs veranda; servants toiled up and down with sandbags. Only in the garden did peace reign.

Then the firing once more ceased. My husband came back from his scouting on the island, the bride and groom with him. Two English boys, our neighbors to the right, dropped in full of excitement and joy. A bachelor farther down the island strolled nonchalantly in. Behind the sandbags we sat in the living-room amidst all the urbanities of afternoon tea, guessing at the events of the night. By morning there was a very big chance the island might be in the hands of Tsai's army. "It would be an easy getaway," exclaimed my British neighbor, who had been in the world war, helping himself to another piece of cake. "Give me a hundred men and I could take this island. These are only country lads in the trenches."

"I don't think they've got ammunition over on the other side," said someone else. And so we conjectured at this marvelous tea-party where all the men, since three that afternoon, had got back their youth. Adventure and daring lit up their eyes.

As it grew dusky in the room everyone quickly left. One was in too dangerous a position moving around after dark this night. The servants could be heard overhead moving the bedroom furniture from the west to the east of the house. Placidly, with no

fuss, they made ready for the extra people under our roof. We took on the look of a barracks. Out in the hall were the stacked guns. Out on the veranda five of the sailors were rolled up in blankets sleeping. Two stood watch in the garden.

My house slept with all these bits of America sheltered within it. Now and then through the night there was the sound of a gun, once the rat-a-tat-tat of machine fire, but morning found us and the island still in the hands of Chao. Those Chinese troops, so brave in the face of certain death in the brilliant sunshine, had no morale for the mystery and uncertainty of darkness, even if it did offer protection.

Again long days of waiting. Rain set in and no Chinese risks his life in it. Sunshine is the time to die. Day after day rain; day after day in my vault-like living room I sat performing woman's old memorial job of waiting. Outside the rain fell, dripping slowly on to the garden. Inside, by the first wood fire of the season, I and the sailor on watch for the day spent our time. In a kind of suspended anxiety I listened to the tale of each sailor in turn. I shall never forget that barricaded room with its leaping fire which untied the tongues of those fellow countrymen of mine, who slept in hammocks, and ate at a mess table from one year's end to another. There I sat and listened to their odysseys, and my mind wove their tales of shipwreck, life on the destroyers, the

misery of first voyages, gay brilliant scenes on shore leave in Spain and South America, carousels after months on a ship, pathetic tales of money saved with a dim idea of a home somewhere, into my anxiety over my husband. Only on his return each evening did I feel certain of his safety. Had a bullet entered the office; were they again under fire going down to the "Installation"?

At last sunshine came and the guns again began to pop through the sunny days. There were rumors again of attacks. Twice all the men came home from the office with their cameras to be on hand for the battle planned for that afternoon. Nothing happened! We tried to tow oil up river. Both sides, although strong in their promises of protection, fired. Our boats had to return. Things grew more tense. Chao's army erected a bridge of boats on the river between us and the office. Our launches had to remain on one side or the other and still nothing happened.

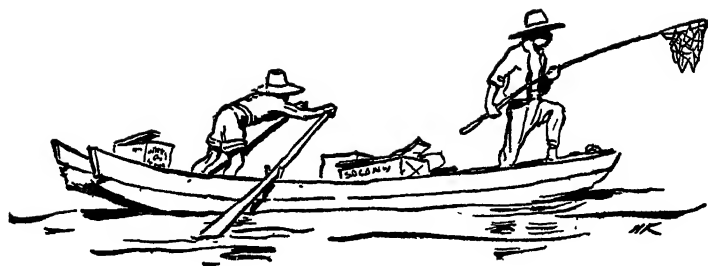
Then one morning I awoke to the distant sound of guns and a cannon. My husband stirred uneasily in his sleep. It did not seem worth while to waken him. This was just another hoax of this queer Oriental war where nothing ever really happened. By ten that morning every gun had ceased so I walked in my garden among the chrysanthemums taking this moment to wrap myself about with its peace. None of the servants bothered to tell me the war had gone from Changsha!

Not until noon, on my husband's return from the office, did I learn that what I had heard at daylight had been the long expected battle! Chao's army had been the one to brave the mist. They had crossed to the mainland down below the British Company's oil station, surprised and routed Tsai's army. What there was of fighting and bravery or cruelty we should never know. In mystery, the war had gone on about us; in mystery, had we waited all these weeks on our island between the two armies; in mystery, that morning it had moved on deeper into the province. Now at noon we stood at the gate at the back of the island watching Chao's men over on the mainland by Yolosan trail along through a now quiet countryside; carrying-coolies, machine guns borne in chairs like invalids, soldiers swinging lanterns and straw shoes, officers shielding themselves from the sun with paper parasols. How strange it seemed to go boldly out of our back gate, to be free from the sense of danger. We examined our back wall and found thirteen bullet marks in it. We blessed it for its substantiality.

But odd sensation! As we stood watching that victorious army trail along the paths by Yolosan we felt only relief at our escape from danger, nothing of the thrill usually attendant upon victory. These were not men of our own origin straggling along the river-bank; they had about them none of the signs of victory that would have thrilled us. Never had I

felt myself more set apart from these people among whom I spent my days. Like the common people of China, we had no real interest in the issue of this fight other than the desire for peace. It was a year and a half later, when that other more sinister danger threatened us, anti-foreign feeling, that we came to rejoice that Chao had won on that mist-shrouded dawn.





CHAPTER XXIV

THE LINK BREAKS

WITH the going of war I found I had lost that brief period of understanding with our little bride. By their enjoyments, men and women hang together, and now that that strange pleasure in excitement had passed, our enjoyments fell apart. Our lives took on the drab or invigorating necessity (according as one saw it) of settling down to our job. There was travel to be done. Not a man had been able to get into the province for the past two months. No one quite knew the conditions of stations buried deep in the interior. Some places had been looted, all were clamoring for supplies of oil. The days were growing short and thousands of little Chinese houses and shops, stretching away to the very borders of Kweichow where the wild tribes roamed, clamored for a cup of oil to light their ten-cent company lamps. To me there was something fascinating to the imagination when night came on and I thought of home after home all over Hunan, holding out its lamp

asking to be provided with light, thus getting the first flicker of twentieth century progress. This was the romance of American business. But not so to the little bride. The movies had taught her no such romance.

To keep the faith with the home office was the great aim of our men. All this time they had been seeking, with considerable danger to themselves, to get oil through to the province. One man had started up river with a tanker, but even the American flag and the flag of the company streaming gallantly from the mast of the tanker had not spared them from a rain of bullets. They were sandbagged, but around the bends of the river these armies, who had promised their protection, with diabolical cunning sent shots the length of the boat. Another man from the office had taken the despatch launch and sought to tow native oil junks through the two lines of troops stationed on the two banks of the river. He too had been fired on and his Chinese sailors had mutinied, so he had been forced to turn back. But they still persisted. I had questioned, one day as we sat at tea with one of the men who had just returned from such a hazardous trip, whether the delivery of oil was worth such risk of life and he had set me right as to the motive. It was not the material delivery of oil he said had made him willing to take the risk—he was a married man with a wife just now gone home for her health. It was the keeping of the good faith with

the company. Not until they had tried and were convinced that everything in their power had been done did they find it possible to acquiesce in the suspension of business. Thus again was it forced on me that if, as we had been accused, business is the god of America, it is with a spirit far from material we serve that god.

All this time this one man, the husband of our little bride, had watched the other men go out to perform such deeds while he did office work, because his wife refused to let him take his part in up-country travel. Strangely enough her unwillingness lay not in her feeling of danger to her husband, but in fear for herself! Never in all her life had she stayed alone and she could not, would not, even if she spent the nights with me as she had been doing during the worst of the fighting. There were the days to be got through with, the necessity for taking over the organization of her life, the facing of problems alone. So he had shamefacedly watched the other men go out and come back while each day the disintegration grew within him. He liked up-country work, and never before had he shirked his part in things. Now his love for his wife, his consideration for her imaginary fears and alarms, was making him dishonor that clean sense of honor which lay at the root of his being, as it did in these other men.

But now that the war had swept on down into the province, the staff of four white men must begin

working the available quarters of the province and this man could no longer shirk his responsibilities. He must take his part in examining business conditions in the accessible areas of the province, ascertain the good faith of the various Chinese agents. So read the ultimatum from the head office.

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The die was now cast, the moment had come, as it does on all frontiers whether they be of trade or settlement, when each man's further conquest, and thus the movement as a whole, lay in the hands of a woman. This was the moment when a fellow-countrywoman held my nation's foreign trade in her hand. A high trust, for we are the oil for the lamp of foreign trade without which it cannot burn.

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That second company house again stands empty. The East again encroaches quietly upon its Occidental fastnesses. As far as this bride is concerned international trade is given up. Her insatiate desire for gaiety has set the seal on it and on our pioneer spirit.

I saw again that strange despairing change in a man deprived of his choice of labor. Like Samson, the woman he loved had shorn him of his strength, and he slunk forth devoid of the courage of his manhood. He could not take his share of the up-country

work and so had to go. Did she not feel some sense of guilt when they got into Hankow on their way down river and, as I heard afterwards, he shunned all his old friends, never going near the office, spending the time between the up-river and down-river sailings on the steamers, enduring the noise of loading cargo, thus avoiding the possibility of meeting friends uptown, or did she just think him highly unreasonable and inconsiderate because he did not take her out to the beautiful race club? And how did it fare with him at home? Was it hard to get another job with that stigma of dismissal against his name? Did she stand by him in that new struggle she had brought upon him or did she eventually taunt him with his inability to support her properly? Did she further sink his manhood in humiliation by doing what she said she was going to do—go back to the luxury her parents could give her, accept their support, and let her father create a place for her husband in his business, a business her husband did not like and for which he had no aptitude? All these were questions in my mind during that winter when I sat before my own house fires amidst the scent of wood smoke and my husband's pipe. More often I asked them when I sat alone while my husband was off on one of those trips.

But not one of these questions were ever answered. We never heard from these two. Was it the scar of his defeat which made them wish to be forgotten?

But like Myra and the "griffin," the bride and groom had added their bit to the personality of the company, growing up in this company house, this company man, weaker and stronger than any of us, worse and better than any of us.

Part IV

The Last Year of This Cycle

In which we experience tremendous things: we witness great volcanic forces at work in China breaking up the mold of centuries; we see anti-foreign feeling smoulder and flame; we feel anew the patriotism of a returning native.

“East is East and West is West
And never the twain shall meet.”

KIPLING.



CHAPTER XXV

THE LAST YEAR BY THE CITY OF THE LONG SAND

THIS cycle of our homesteading swung into its third year. The summer of nineteen twenty-four was upon us and our home-leave was scheduled for the following summer. In this commercial pilgrimage one reaches the apex of one's "settling in" somewhere about the end of the second year of any cycle. From then on one's view-point is changed. One begins to withdraw from the creative spirit of homesteading. One begins to say, "We won't spend any more money on fixing things up. It won't pay, we are going to leave so soon." Thus even as I reach the peak of each cycle's endeavor, do I begin to draw away from it as all my thoughts become permeated with these few short months I am to have in America.

And the summer of nineteen hundred and twenty-four was that moment for us. The emotion of the returning native was beginning to take hold of us. Until now, for two years, we had lavished upon

Hunan, Changsha, the island, the baronial castle, our intensest interest, felt ourselves, by the ties of business and home, to be bound to this queer Oriental setting. Now, imperceptibly all this was changing. First, it expressed itself in an added clutch at the things we had so painstakingly built up and made our own and which must now be relinquished. I was possessed of an exaggerated love of everything I had created, as if in this way I could give a bit of immortality to this seven times seven home. It tore at the fabric of my being to destroy my home. I had always felt the same about each one of my homes, no matter how poor they had been.

But there was the paramount emotion of the returning native which that summer, day by day, took deeper possession of me. Were we not going home to America! This anticipation ran like a golden thread through all my activities. It gave me at times strange thrills that sent shivers over my body. I would be in the midst of some task when this old new sensation of going home would engulf me, or I would wake in the night with excited wonder as to what my beloved country would seem like this time. It is the same with any wanderer from any country unless he has lost his nationality. We can always tell when he is going back. There is a shining look of expectancy about one on the threshold of "home-leave." He walks with a new vigor, is possessed with a new vitality.

But it was yet too early to do such dreaming—a whole year before we started. Changsha, this home town of ours by adoption, Hunan, this home state of ours by adoption, had much to say to us yet. So although I dreamed these happy dreams of America throughout the early spring, by summer I found myself sucked down again into the perplexing, turbulent problems of Hunan and of all China. Unconsciously perhaps, but no less surely, had we in these two years since we had come to Hunan become impregnated with her agitated life. The bandit raids down in the province, the students' boycott of the Japanese, the war of the two generals, had become entangled with our own home life just as had the struggles of the people of that bleak wild frontier of Manchuria woven themselves into the first cycle of our home-steading.

Let any man live outside his own country at his own peril. It changes him irrevocably. Unless he is some curious, aloof, self-centered human being, always afterward he will feel the stretch and pull of the problems of two countries. For us interest in Hunan and all China was not just a commercial one. Had we not spent the best years of our maturity within her confines? While of course our first love was our own country, still we bore a very real affection for China and of necessity her struggles were leaving deeper and deeper marks upon us with each succeeding year.

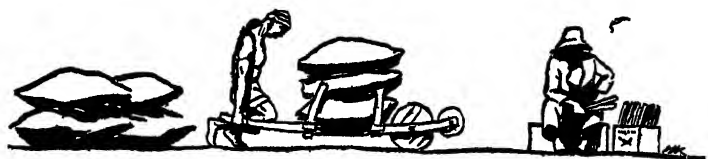
It was in this summer of 1924 that we felt that the accumulating unrest in China was mounting towards a crisis. We had sensed for a long time, in a general way, that this was coming, but it was not until now that the undisturbed mold of the centuries seemed about to be rent asunder.

We had grown accustomed since the passing of the Manchu rulers to having no strong central government but depending year in and year out upon China's common people going about their self-appointed tasks, holding in respect and reverence their ancestors who had taught them to go on ceaselessly working, letting the government take its own erratic way while they obeyed the word of the village fathers.

Suddenly the bandits were recruited from these very strongholds of order, the villages, under the very noses of the village fathers; and the young people of China who in all China's long history had obeyed the great old men of their family, were demanding that they run their own and their country's affairs. They insisted that professors whom they did not like should be dismissed, they started boycotts, they called strikes of coolies and workmen.

The government in Peking was no longer anything but government in name. The war-lords of each province or each two or three, waxed strong, put new and unlawful taxes on foodstuffs and coal, demanded under threat of death large sums of money from individuals or cities, and issued their own cur-

rencies which they made the people take in exchange for their silver. Then with these resources they fought among each other for supremacy. Since we had returned to China in 1922, we had partaken of three factional wars; one in the North, that one in Hunan, and one around Canton. Thus, did we feel the jar of great volcanic forces at work breaking up the crust of centuries of repose. It was a profound, soul-shaking experience.



CHAPTER XXVI

FLOOD

THE year opened for us in Hunan with spectacular disaster. Day after day, week after week, all winter, spring, and early summer, the rain fell. The river at our gates time after time rose with dramatic suddenness and with no less showy suddenness drained away into the Tung Ting Lake. That was our only salvation from flood—that draining away of the waters into the lake. But early we foreboded catastrophe. If the upper Yangtse should have one of its quick rises of seventy feet, the lake would be filled and flood would be upon us. About once in five years these floods came breaking through the inadequate dikes, flooding the rice paddies, destroying that year's crop of rice. One of those years was now due.

The military sold and shipped away the last year's reserves of rice. The early rise of the river, the all but inevitable indication that we should indeed have flood, offered them their opportunity. There was no one to stay their hands. In the days of monarchy the tribute of rice and grain from each province was

stored in the imperial graneries to be kept until the next year's harvest, to guard against famine. But in this day of the republic over there on the docks the steamers loaded rice, and the merchants and people alike shut their eyes to the signs of flood and its grim companion, famine.

May wore away into June and now the river no longer ran quickly away into the lake. And the rain continued to fall in great devastating sheets as if a lake had been turned upside down over us. Reports began to come in from up-river saying that all the little streams were in flood. The waters came swiftly now sweeping along past our embankments. Already by the three gray and gaunt houses in the centre of the island, the water stood so high that our sampanmen rowed us right over the steps to their gates. And still it rained and still Hunan, like the foolish virgins, shipped away her rice.

Faster, faster came the water sent down by myriads of streams from all Hunan, and the lake no longer drained it away. The Yangtse, now full, acted like a dam backing it up, so suddenly the flood was upon us. Our river rose a foot in an hour, then two feet in an hour. Flood stared us in the face. Over the path that led to the club and our neighbors, flowed the river. Then in another day I watched the water climb the second flight of steps right up to our great iron gates. No longer did the life of the river lie shut off by our garden-wall. The junks first showed their

masts above it, then the round interlaced bamboo tops of the holds appeared. Step by step the water climbed inside our gate and now the junks sailed over our path, the junk-men striking their iron tipped poles into our second embankment, taking hold of the once high branches of our willows. Lighters, steam-tugs left the middle of the river with its sweeping current to sail close in the lea of the island embankments.

The river, the river intruded its presence wherever I went, robbing us of all seclusion. The shouts of the junk-men, the throb of the engines of steamers and lighters filled my house; the junks and the steamers rode level with my garden. Thus was my house suddenly set down by a great rushing thoroughfare. Even in the upstairs windows the high white sails of the junks would hang for a moment like wind-blown curtains, then go away again, as if some unseen hand had drawn them. The river, a ruthless destructive force, crept higher. It broke the island into a number of islands. We lived on an island all to ourselves.

But I could not think only of my house. Whether war or flood or other disaster, our first thought was of that place down the river, of that industrial castle where watchmen stood guard day and night. My husband came home one afternoon with anxious face. We hurried over tea and then we took the launch down-river to see what was happening. The water had held steady for half the afternoon but now it was rising again. It stood well over that high

stone bunding in front of the office and was two feet deep around the post at the office gates.

As we shot down river with the current we saw a long dike had given way and the river had rushed in, covering the rice fields on one side as far as we could see. The embankment around our own godown still stood three feet above the water but the water was still rising. The men were working, getting the oil pumps into readiness for pumping the water out should it break through the ground inside the wall. The white man in charge looked excited, alert and heavy eyed. What with the summer's quick succession of tankers coming in at all hours of the day and night, and now this menace of water, he rarely had time to sleep. The equipment of trade on this frontier, New York had put in our keeping. Whether war or flood menaced us we must not fail our skyscraper, the sign and seal of our country's trade.

Slowly on our return we worked upstream against the swift turbulent waters. It was long past nightfall before we reached the jumbled city. In the twilight we looked out over the flooded countryside. The broken dikes were only faintly discernible, a thin green line over which the water rippled. Beyond, the rice fields lay entirely submerged. And again the patient common people accepted their fate without outcry, appearing to feel no resentment against the officials who feathered their own nests with the money which should have been spent in public service.

Silently they worked, rescuing their pitifully few possessions from their huts. Rafts were being manoeuvred across the once green rice paddies laden with pots and pans and the family pigs. Sampans were floating inside many a housedoor or were moored to the eaves of thatched roofs showing above the swift moving water. In the dim depths of one hut trestles were just discernible on the tops of which we saw perched the household possessions and the family itself. Their patient crouching forms awoke our pity. Along one narrow pathway on the top of a dike over which even now the water rippled, stood literally all that one family owned, even to a coffin which either housed the last of the past generation or had been purchased to make sure the quiet future of those who now lived. This powerful river, which these weak men had fought all their lives with their bare hands, knowing nothing of machinery, threatened them even in their final sleep. As I looked, the angular underfed form of a wonk trotted along the quickly narrowing dike seeking his home. Forlornly, shrinkingly, he faced a narrow inrunning river, then leaped it just making the slippery bank on the other side. His lean, hungry and cowed outline to me typified these people.

I turned away and watched the lights of the city come slowly nearer us. Man and beast alike seemed mastered, controlled, browbeaten by the primitive forces of nature, both equally patient, equally help-

less. I looked back over all the disasters I had seen these people of China meet and I realized not once had I heard them cry out. There was always that dumb patience. I had seen them in war, in a great fire sweeping away a large portion of the city. I had seen them under plague and flood and the ultimate scarcity of food but never had I heard them protest. The idiom for their resignation so constantly used had become a part of my own vocabulary "mei yu fatzu" "there is no way out." Here was the huge and great country of China, the first to make themselves instruments to look at the stars now being ground under the heel of nature uncontrolled, and of war-lords, using for personal gain the meagre resources of the people.

At last we reached the city and crossed over to the island. Once more I was within the substantial walls of my own house with its garden still above the flood mark. But even so we were bound to Hunan's wheel of disaster. We had elected to live our lives in this country and its life penetrated ours.

There was no meat for dinner. "Too much fear," said the cook, and added "mei yu fatzu" "there is no way out." An order had gone out that not an animal should be killed until these gods of rain and water had been appeased. In this Twentieth Century this was the only remedy, the only effort made to fight an ever-recurring disaster. The river in our few hours' absence had risen alarmingly and now stood well within the

gate of our compound, lapping the last of our three embankments.

Wherever I looked in the next few days was water. Our own high-built land stood up in an island with water washing past it at the rate of four knots an hour. It rose to the highest water-mark ever recorded. The electric cable from the mainland washed out and we had no lights and no electric fans. We had no meat because of the edict, eggs were at a premium because the farmers were washed out or could not get to town, we had few vegetables for the ceaseless rain that fell from the gray sky destroyed everything. The governor, that same governor who had caused us and the common people so much woe with his fighting in the autumn, now sent out troops to fire at the angry demon in the sky; so every now and then there was the boom of guns heard above the steady downpour of rain. He, our leader, also made sacrifice on the bund of a ram, a bull, and a boar and cast them into the river to appease the dragon of the water, who was in his anger deluging us with so much rain. Now certainly all had been done that could be done. What more could any reasonable person ask?

I sat in my own strong house, feeling the despair of the people as I had never felt it before, feeling this disaster of the waters that now licked the last step of our tall flight, which now stood well over the floors of most of the island houses, this sullen ruthless

water which lay over the rice fields as far as we could see, and which threatened the rice crop of all Hunan.

Then at last as if it had taunted us enough, the waters slowly went down just in time to spare us from complete disaster. The patient people set to work to save what they could of their rice and by the pure miracle of industry, they harvested a partial crop, just enough to keep the province from famine. This would be again a great people if animal-like industry could be turned into creative industry, if acquiescence into constructive desire. But "there is no other way" was the lotus they still ate.

War had now become epidemic in China. Provinces went to war with themselves, north and south went to war, there was even talk of war with other countries. In September, 1924, war broke out around Shanghai. The fighting quieted down around Shanghai only to break out around Peking. The war-lord, Wu Pei-fu, and the ex-bandit war-lord, Chang Tso-lin, were at each other's throats. Chang Tso-lin moved down from his stronghold in Mukden to meet the powerful Wu Pei-fu. Then, exciting moment, Wu Pei-fu's much relied upon Christian? general Feng-Yu-hsiang turned traitor to him striking him from behind. One night he took over Peking and thrust out of his quiet and guarded place in the palace the little emperor who, during all the days of the republic, had been treated with courtesy and consideration. What

heretofore unheard of influences were at work in suave old China?

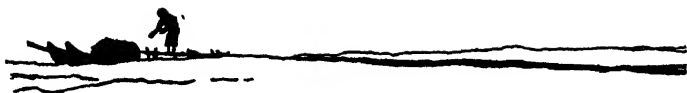
A few weeks of quiet just before Christmas and then our own turbulent province showed what was going on underneath. From various sources pamphlets fell into our hands denouncing the white man. In some, threats against us were made openly, but in others, they were veiled as in the pamphlets just before the Boxer troubles. Accounts were given of men using knives to kill animals and cut up meat. The Chinese characters for these words were so handled that these statements were, in reality, threats and propaganda against us. These pamphlets were issued by a group of young people who styled themselves the "Reds," the radical wing of the Komintang. All over China Christmas day was set as a day to denounce Christianity.

Thus it was that my great house was set that third winter to the ominous under-current of suspicion, hatred, and class unrest in China, strange subterranean currents. And yet never had there been a time in China when individual feeling with the Chinese had seemed so satisfactory. Never perhaps since religion and trade had come to China had there been so little for the Chinese to misunderstand and yet all around you felt these hot flames of hatred. It was like having carefully tended garden spots with forest fires creeping close. At the office the Chinese were most friendly. Inside my house all was peace. We had shaken down

into a strongly welded-together household. All of the servants had been with me over a year which entitled them to a whole month's "cumshaw" on Chinese New Year. Individually they served me as few servants have served me and yet—and yet—. For the first time in all my sojourn in China I sometimes felt fear. Indeed by nature these were a gentle people but race hatred is a fiery potion that drives men to mad deeds.

So I thought as I moved within the four walls of my stronghold, my home. My stronghold would be but paper against such danger. I remembered now what a far journey it was three years ago this winter when we had come to this house with no fear in our hearts. That journey reversed with such a fear would indeed be long. There was the walk down the thin ash path, the ride in the sampan, the ride in the launch to Yochow, the ride in a large boat from the gateway of the lake, if such a boat could be had, and there was still the long trip down the Yangtse to bring us to Shanghai. Shanghai which we had always thought of as our sanctuary in times of trouble but to which the war had swung back from the north, making it but a stronghold built upon sand.

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CHAPTER XXVII

THE HOLIDAYS

AND amidst all these influences the white man's life went on as quietly and as frivolously as on any Main Street in America. Birds build nests even in war zones and so did we. We had a new bride occupying the old junior mess over the office and great were the flutterings and twitterings as they settled in. There were ten now in the company to sit down for my Thanksgiving company tiffin. For before we knew it with all this ferment of old and new forces going on around us, Thanksgiving was upon us, the beginnings of the holiday season that only ended with the China New Year and included the British Twelfth Night and Boxing Day.

Thanksgiving seemed never to take root in these heterogeneous Main streets. They did not have the atmosphere for Thanksgiving. The Chinese could not comprehend it at all. They could not conceive of such a thing as the beginning of a country. Their beginnings were hidden in mystery. Neither did the British comprehend it. They were divided between regarding it as the day in which we celebrated our independence from them, and that of course did not make them rejoice with us, and in thinking it a day

when we gorged ourselves, for what reason they never seemed to be certain. That it was a kind of "lest we forget" for our forefathers who risked death and hardship to settle America they did not grasp. They, like the Chinese, belonged to an old country and could not conceive how real to us was the experience of those log cabin ancestors of ours who celebrated the first Thanksgiving. Just once in all my years in China had it ever seemed real. That was the Thanksgiving we spent in the Sugar Godown. And that was not like the Thanksgivings I had known in my childhood but was a kind of mythical one done after the pattern of the stories told me of my pioneer ancestors' Thanksgivings. It was very cold as it should be on Thanksgiving when I awoke in the godown that morning. Nestling down in the covers until the coolie had started my fire, I was thinking what a dismal Thanksgiving it was going to be as my husband was up-country, when he came through the heavy wind-doors of my room carrying a wild turkey so big that its wings dragged on the floor. My actor cook, facile in his emotions, caught the spirit of the day and hurried through pies and cakes and sauces equal to the glory of that bird which he roasted a beautiful golden brown. And the crude setting of the godown with the feast spread not far from the fireplace enhanced our feeling of pioneer Thanksgiving.

But the day certainly did not transplant to this

cosmopolitan island community. All the rest of the white men of the island went to their offices as usual and the servants did not catch the spirit. Why should we feast when no one else did and in the middle of the day? All proper white men's feasts came in the evening. So although we went through the usual Thanksgiving forms it lacked the feeling which at home in America mingled to a nicety feast and Thanksgiving. There was something a little sad about it. A nostalgia of nationality came over me before the day was over. With all its feasting I concluded this day was too austere a holiday to transplant, with all its emphasis on eating; this day was tied up with our Puritan origins and did not fit into this more pagan atmosphere. Sitting in my house after the guests had gone, I knew the day had brought me only the feeling that we, like the men who made the day, were pilgrims.

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It was only a few days afterwards that something occurred to enhance that nostalgia which, no matter how happy the majority of one's homesteading days are, slips over one at times with the sickness of desire.

“For there come
Gray moments of the ancient dumb
Sickness of travel, when no song
Can cheer us, but the way seems long
And one remembers. . .

“Ah, the beat
Of weary unreturning feet,
And songs of pilgrims unreturning!”

It was death that came among us. And after all, death is a very rare visitor in our communities. These towns of ours of two decades have a low death rate. Like the Chinese who go to America but go back to China to die, we try to do the same. Strange, but the love of our own country seems to be strongest in all of us when death approaches. For some reason we can live without our relatives but we cannot die without them. We long to mingle our dust with that of our ancestors.

Our little Main Street of the Long Sand has, besides the German community, another hidden settlement of which I have not spoken because it rarely is spoken of—our settlement of the dead. Too alien and alone to dwell upon, it seems, is this burial place of those who have died amongst us and who sleep out on the Chinese hillside on the mainland beyond the city, reached by a winding path along the dikes between the rice paddies. But never since we had come to this town had it been necessary to go to it. And now a little child, who had not stayed with his parents long enough ever to visit his own country of America, started on this long pilgrimage. We who had seen death a thousand times come to our neighbors, the Chinese, garbed in red and heralded with bands and tom-toms and cymbals and had feared we were grow-

ing callous to human woe because sorrow in this guise did not move us, now before this tiny coffin felt the floodgates of our sympathies opened. This tiny death, too, as I said, enhanced our sense of being pilgrims. Like our forefathers we must needs lay our dead away under strange soil.

And then we swung into Christmas! Now this was a day that had about it the familiar ring! Although it belonged definitely to the Christian religion it had taken unto itself long ago a certain pagan quality of joy. All white nations came to it full of traditions and the Chinese entered with zest into the preparations, for they understood a holiday where you gave presents. They loved the baubles and lights of a Christmas tree. They revelled in our almost pagan revelling.

Invitations were out weeks ahead for parties on Boxing Day, parties on New Year's Eve, and this indeed the Chinese could understand for were they not soon to have their own great holiday, their own New Year. Christmas night was to be given over to general feasting and gaiety with dinner at the club, a Christmas tree and dancing and games. Someone started the idea quite spontaneously in order that no one should be left out on Christmas, a thing most dreaded and most apt to happen. Our community changed so rapidly that in a number of small dinners some young man who had been up-country for most of his stay in the port was apt to be forgotten or

some family of newcomers no one could fit in at the last minute or some quite impossible rough diamond, whose heart yearned for Christmas, was taboo by every hostess as impossible for her too select party.

Thus the idea of the community Christmas dinner. Noble and splendid idea but alas fraught with danger. There are wheels within wheels in these communities and one morning we awoke to the fact that we were in the throes of a port "scrap." At intervals these tear our little Main Streets to bits. Alas, the two women who had proposed the party were not the number-one ladies of the port, and whoever heard of any great event going forward without being conceived and sponsored by the great? And greater sin even than that, in choosing the energetic and able-bodied workers the committee had been made to consist of three Americans to one Britisher. This was almost a diplomatic offense.

The port boiled like a tightly clamped kettle, which indeed it resembled, with its ingrowing life shut away from the world. And there were other difficulties, difficulties of the palate. Did not every nation have its own Christmas dishes? The Britisher was afraid this three-to-one American committee would serve him ice-cream on Christmas evening than which there could be nothing more dreadful. The Americans almost fainted over the British insistence that the turkey could only be served after it was properly announced by soup, fish, roast beef, to which no

vegetables other than boiled potatoes were to be attached. The British retorted that we could shorten the dinner by leaving out the salad which was wholly American and have a truly proper dinner by following the three meat courses directly with plum pudding or if we must have a salad make it a meat salad. Whereupon the Americans, dreaming of something fresh and green, fainted anew and brought consternation upon their British friends by suddenly demanding cranberry sauce, without which no American would think Christmas dinner complete and with which no Englishman would consider a Christmas dinner correct.

We who a few short days before had been the best of friends now looked askance at each other, wondering in our hearts if that other man would support us in our campaign for cranberry sauce or four meat courses. After all we were not so different from the Hunanese who found the salt of life in a little strife. It was ennui which brought about the port scraps. It had no more to do with five meat courses or plum pudding or cranberry sauce or even nationality, for after all were not one's best friends more often than not from the other nationalities? Congeniality of tastes lay deeper than nationality and were we not after all of one branch and stock? So, I reiterate, these things had nothing whatever to do with it. It was when people had grown tired of seeing the same thirty or forty faces, when they had played bridge or poker ad infinitum, when they had looked upon the

length and breadth of the island days without number and walked unrelieved miles on the Long Sand and talked of the same topics for weeks, the fall of the river, the politics of Hunan, that these tempests in the teapot came.

In some ports these bring everlasting feuds but we were a wise port and only used them to clear the air. And now mixed in with the Christmas preparations was the joy of battle. Everyone had something new to talk about, the familiar faces around us took on the zest of unfamiliarity. The zest of uncertainty was in the air. Would people smile at you or would they look askance? You saw with delight each one taking off his cloak of pretense and declaring in the open his hidden feelings. This was a kind of cameo satire on life, this island struggle for position of leading lady.

Underneath all the quarrelling everyone was extremely happy. It added all the condiments to our island life that had been lacking. When you watched the struggle a little removed you got from it the pleasure of going to the movies or a theatre and when you descended into the arena to do battle yourself you got the joy and excitement of combat and when it was all over and everything had been amicably arranged, as it was by Christmas evening, your friends' faces took on an added meaning and an added value. You stopped taking them as a matter of course and loved them as never before. We all worked hard and

worried about whether our end of it would go. The club had to be decorated, wires had to be sent to Shanghai ordering turkeys and plum pudding and glazed fruits and toys for the children, for of course we were having a Christmas tree for them.

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In the midst of these preparations my husband and I slipped away for a couple of days hunting down-river. Since that long period of solitude in Manchuria we had found bits of solitude very necessary to our well-being, and just now we felt it would make the Christmas excitement all the more interesting. In our eagerness we were up the morning that our launch reached the now reed-covered bed of the Tung Ting Lake long before dawn. We clambered up a high embankment and there we felt the marshes stretching away before us in unending blackness. As we walked we heard only the swish of the low marsh grass under our feet. Very short it was, for the natives had recently cut it for their winter's firewood. I had always wondered what these Chinese marshes were like before daylight. Often I had lain in my bed at home and thought of spots on the earth like this lying under the veil of night, wondering what would be their message. Now as I followed my husband an old fear died within me, the fear of dust thou art to dust return. Here on the marshes those words went through my mind like a rhythmical chant with the

swish of the sturdy marsh grass as their accompaniment. No longer did that idea of dust to dust bring me any sadness. To be a part of this earth seemed good to me, this earth with its sturdy growth, this earth which offered herself as a bed for the deer whose bark we could hear as they scurried away in the dark, this earth over which we could hear the far-away low sleepy calls of the wild geese on the ponds. Truly whether in life or death one would create. Half-conscious wearinesses of soul were healed in that hour before dawn. It was a revelation which I might have had in the dim morning in any country but it came to me in China. And somehow I knew instinctively that my husband who walked ahead of me was experiencing something of the same feeling. As we stood hand in hand watching the low pale light creep over the earth we found ourselves bound in that deep union which we had experienced so often traveling together in Manchuria. We found also we had walked ourselves in circles and were on the wide half-dry banks from which the lake had just recently receded. It was still too muddy to stand our weight and away on the water the geese were uttering their far-off low calls. Then they started their morning flight, sweeping over the gray morning sky, skimming the horizon. On that marshy floor of the river our two figures stood out in colossal clearness and the birds towered in their flying. It looked as if we should have to go back without our Christmas goose

when a flock passed directly over us and my husband shot and hit one in the wing. He hurtled in the air and then fell at our feet. Then we went back to the launch and started home with much satisfaction.

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And so we swept into the Christmas festivities, a week of them, our own quiet home dinner on Christmas eve, the great and now historic port dinner on Christmas evening. Such a scene! Around the wall stood a row of whiteclad house-boys. In the middle of the room an L-shaped table with covers for fifty people, a table gay with crackers and crystal bowls of holly, a table groaning with the Christmas delicacies of every nationality who were to sit around it. Yellow and red wines sparkled in the glasses and added their color and their gift of merriment. We toasted each other in champagne, in port. We ate sakouskas for the Russians and roast beef for the Englishmen and cranberry sauce for the Americans, and something else for the French, and loved each other with the strength imbued in our veins with wines and the strength of experiences shared.

There followed in that week parties for the children, with Christmas trees and Santa Claus dressed up in a long Chinese robe, fancy dress parties when the twelve children of the island under the surveillance of their amahs appeared as tiny pirates, harem ladies, powder puffs and Dutch dolls. We had grown-up parties on

Twelfth Night and parties to watch the old year out and parties to begin the new year. No one at home ever celebrates as we did. You have not that nostalgia of the exile to overcome.

Strange perhaps but now when I think of the year's gala-days, it seems that China New Year has left the deepest mark upon me and yet in all this record I have never mentioned it. Why I do not know as it has come to affect me profoundly. At first when I came to China it was not that way. I was just a spectator. But each succeeding year I seem to have been steeped a little more deeply in its meaning. It is more than a day. It is a state of mind that lasts as much as a month, a month when the West goes down before the East. China, roused a little from her traditions, settles back into them. Even the ferment of students is lost in the subordination of the individual to the family. The dead of centuries overshadow the living. Our own work of the skyscraper is as nothing. Millions of dead Chinese assert their claim over the living and foreign business is for the time annihilated. There is nothing for our men to do but to sit and wait until old China, traditional China, million-year-old China has performed her ancient rites. Even our homes which we keep inviolate all the rest of the year are sucked up into the China round them.

On this island it came that year with a vehemence that seemed almost to overpower me. Evidently

the money market was good. That always had a great deal to do with it. For several years the governor had put the ban on certain ceremonies. He feared the excited state of mind of the people. His position seemed too insecure to risk such things as the dragon boat frenzy. But this year all was to be allowed: firecrackers, dragon boats, and dragon dances.

China New Year's fell that year in January and its celebration began to take possession of Hunan a week, two weeks, before that day, imperceptibly at first so that I thought little of it. First the coal boats made their last trip before New Year and, regardless of the fact that these junkmen were poor, poorer than anything you can imagine, they anchored their boats. In thirty days of idleness and feasting all the carefully saved coppers and cash of the year would be spent. Next the cook jogged my memory suggesting that I lay in a supply of coal. Soon I was told by the same individual to lay in a supply of wood and then a week before the day I was urged to buy enough food for a couple of weeks. The Chinese already had hanging around the servants' quarters bits of pork, choice and odorous dried condiments, and ducks and geese began to collect with alarming rapidity in the servants' yard. So we all prepared against the complete stopping of business for a week, the only time in all the year when all China has a holiday from work. I enjoyed this stir of preparation. It appeared like an exaggerated Thanksgiving at home

and it was pleasant to see the Chinese prepare to enjoy themselves. I always feel this way before New Year's really happens.

And then China New Year broke upon us. Strange day, the strangest day in all the year. We had let the servants go home the night before with the exception of the number-two coolie who was to tend the fires on New Year's morning. So for the only day in the year we woke with the queer sensation of all the house quiet. It is not possible any other day in the whole year to free the house of Chinese. Even if you wished it they would not all leave. It is not custom ever to leave a master unattended. There is no time in all the other three hundred and sixty-four days when, if you stop to listen to the pulse of the house, you will not hear that second pulse which is the Chinese life which always beats beneath your own. Their loves, their hates, their gambling, their superstitions, their religious ceremonies, the second life of the house is always throbbing beneath yours. It rises and falls according to the time of the day but never is quite still.

But on this one day of the year we awoke to feel the house utterly, well nearly utterly, still. There was only the scrape of the coolie's poker against the grates of the fireplaces, a sound which usually mingled with all the various murmurs of the house but which on this morning rang through the silent house like a pistol shot. We got up unattended by the boy, my

husband put his own cuff buttons in and I made ready my own bath and then went down to prepare the breakfast. The house seemed positively uncanny. I entered the kitchen which for this one day in the year was mine. Not entirely though for there was that coolie who had made the fire and now by custom stood docilely waiting for my instructions. By ten o'clock I had freed the house of even that coolie. How strange it was, stranger than you can ever imagine, that house untouched with any life save our own. Never a door that opened save by ourselves. It was a little as if the great apartment house in which you live in America, which usually harbors so many separate pulses had suddenly been divested of any life but your own.

I sat in a big chair in the living-room terribly self-conscious of my husband's and my own breathing, of the snap of the great coal fire which the coolie had built grate-high before he left. Gradually another life came back to me, the life of my girlhood when on January Sundays I used to watch from our windows the raw new Illinois prairie spread out before me and within hear only the scratch of my father's pen or my brother and sister turning the leaves of a Sunday magazine. It all came back to me; the plain simple living of our New England family gone west, the proud reliance on ourselves for most of the services of everyday living. And here was my own adventure in going west attended with the luxury of a dozen

servants and so accustomed had I become to it that the little activities for myself and my husband's comfort which I had performed this day had been entirely unfamiliar to me. Then into the renewed consciousness of my middle west life came with a kind of annihilating force the beat of the tom-toms. I had been restless under their sound all night but only now did my attention centre on them.

I am sure you cannot imagine the power of a tom-tom. You must hear it beaten hour after hour by a native, a man who himself feels its power to ward off devils, to do all kinds of supernatural things. You must hear it begin slowly, softly, two deep pounding notes, then hear them quicken, hasten, increase in volume until it is beating in a frenzy and then you must multiply it by a thousand. That is what the Chinese were doing that New Year's morning that seemed like a middle west Sunday in its lack of stir in the house.

I, a daughter of the middle west, I, bred in the clear atmosphere of America where the pools of experience are not deeper than a few generations and where unpretentious religious ceremonies date no further back than the pilgrim fathers, sat there inside my house and shivered under the power of those tom-toms. Centuries upon centuries of struggling human beings spoke through them. Our solid walls of sturdy masonry seemed paper against the onslaught of the fears, the pain, the hunger, the thirst of the millions of human beings who had lived before right in this very spot

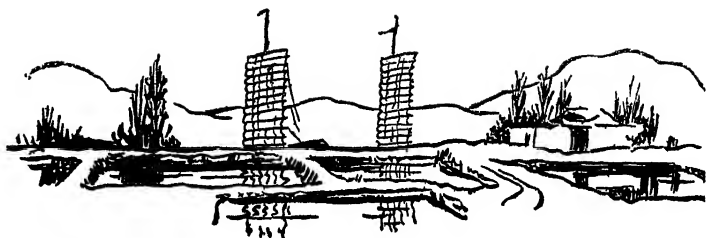
and who now spoke through the tom-toms. I tried to read. I could not. All I could do was to listen to the beat of the tom-tom, soft, slow—two muffled pounding notes, a kind of low wail, first protest of a savage. Listen as those tom-toms gain in volume, listen to the anguish and fear and ecstasy beginning to speak through them. Quicker, faster, on, on that terrible monotony now reaching up, up to a frenzy of sound. And yet only those two notes to voice the anguish, the exaltation, the terrible precarious existence of an old overpopulated country. Not one tom-tom voicing those two notes, but one from every junk beating forth its message. And like a low forbidding accompaniment came the roar of the tom-toms from the city and the separate pound, pound of the tom-toms of the huts on the island. They pulled at my nerve centres until they felt raw and bleeding.

The servants were back at work, some that night and some the next morning but they came and went all the next two weeks. A power greater than any need of money pulled them ever and ever back to that terrific ancestral life in their homes. But the tom-toms did not cease for two weeks either day or night. Sometimes exhausted they almost died away only to have some one tom-tom on junk or in hut pick up the dying note. Gradually each of the fifteen days I have given up a little more and a little more my regular activities.

Tonight the middle of the first month of the China

New Year I lie in my bed upstairs high above the native life that in a frenzy has worked itself out to this last night through the dragon dances and the slow march of the dragon boats up river, rowed in awful monotony of stroke to the awful monotonous rhythm of the tom-toms. Tomorrow they promise it shall be quiet. Out on the river from that black mass of junks first from one and then another a flare lights up the great hulks and the tall, tall masts. Strings of firecrackers go off. The night advances; the tom-toms reach the climax of their monotonous frenzy and at last towards morning die away. As I slip off to sleep I think of how all this superstition and fear but unvoiced, suppressed, lives in my house every day in the year. Amah and coolie and cook and boy as they go silently about the house, are living those selfsame fears and superstitions that have been speaking in the tom-toms. I know now beyond a doubt it influences the life of this company house, influences my life.

And so the holiday season ends.



CHAPTER XXVIII

SHADOWS OF DISASTER

IT was February again, the third anniversary of this cycle of homsteading. Each day I stood in the lookout window in the wing of my house which had been mine now for a thousand and more days. As I had foreseen three years ago, those stretches of sand, Changsha, the uncertain river which lay between, the improvised jetty, the whip-thong path, the island town, the company people, had become woven into the very texture of my mind. By the mere process of standing there day after day watching for my husband's return from his office I had come to regard with affection those tawny stretches of sand, come to take pleasure in their barrenness and coloring. I had even come to see beauty in that great, gray, sprawling city across the way. I now watched for a streak of sunlight at sunset to pick out from the gray half tones the curved and gilded roof of a temple set on a hill and a bit of city wall standing in relief against the evening sky. And always as on that first

day I was held fascinated by the hidden, seething life of that city. Although the City of the Long Sand had indeed become my home town, although I had become united to it by the experiences of peace and war, by the disaster of the flood and the prosperity of the springs when the world of trade floated on the bosom of its river, I still felt its mystery, I still wondered over its final message to us. Then the short day would be gone and I should turn to the leaping fire, and books, and the quiet service of the boy bringing in tea, and my husband's call from the hall below.

More and more often that winter did we sit in the lookout room. In it we could withdraw for a time from the insistent demands of the intense striving Main Street that from this viewpoint took on more normal proportions, became something quite tiny in the world at large, feel recede from us a little the problems of the company and the company people.

The room, by much use and much love expended on it, had grown very cozy. Its yellow curtains imparted to it a prophecy of the sunlight which would come again when winter was over. The coolie and I had combined on a truly marvelous fire that leaped to perfection at tea-time—that hour which I loved best, that most expansive hour of the day. It was then that many people came to sit in the circle of chairs around that fire piled higher than the bars of the grate. The latest company bride came often on her husband's first trip up-country. There were men from Shanghai,

company men on business, now and then a traveler who had drifted this far inland, and men and women from the straggling street that lay below who stopped in for a cup of tea and a chat.

But more and more often now the wings of dread hovered over us even in that secluded room. I kept asking my husband what would be the outcome of all the anti-foreign talk, of these doctrines of hate and destruction. We would discuss the men of old China, the merchants and bankers who were still going their accustomed ways, too worried with the forced contributions to the military and their losses in bandit raids to realize the significance of their sons' and daughters' rebellion. Occasionally they were irritated by some chance happening as was Mr. Chen the morning he came into the office saying he had overheard some ricksha coolies talking nonsense. "What did they say?" asked my husband. "That men did not work in Russia and had plenty to eat and wear," answered Mr. Chen. "Why is it, then, we have Russians peddling blankets in Changsha?" he continued with fine scorn. "They've been listening to one of those students talking on the streets," he added in much the same tone as some of us are wont to speak of soap-box oratory. Then he took up the, to him, far more important matter of getting oil into a bandit-controlled part of Hunan.

We often wondered what he thought when he heard the students at crowded corners telling the

passing throng, who were smarting under the rising price of rice and the high-handed ways of the soldiers, that these and many other miseries had been brought upon them by the white man's presence. But he never told us.



CHAPTER XXIX

CASTLES IN THE AIR

BUT no sinister threats of danger could keep a frontier tradesman on the last stretch of a cycle of homesteading from building castles and my castles of America began to rise again, beautiful and perfect in the clouds that drifted over Yolosan, as spring advanced and we sat at tea now downstairs in the cool blueness of our drawing-room. We were to go on home leave in the Fall. Castles of America more perfect than anything you who are not exiles could ever dream of would rise right up beneath my hands in the garden, along the stone-flagged path that started at the two sentinel evergreens in the gateway of the hedge. Fantastic and breath-takenly beautiful castles rose out of the pool down between the drooping ring of green willows where the yellow crocuses were opening to the spring sun. Castles of beauty would rise out of that sprawling City of the Long Sand, castles which were built out of memory and anticipation.

It all came back to me now, every step of our

last home leave. That epic voyage across the Pacific! How long were those twenty-five days to the Golden Gate, how we wanted to hurry away from the ports of Japan, how we begrudged time for sight-seeing? For us that was a pilgrim ship, that was an epic voyage, that returning of natives to their own shores. Truly a pilgrim ship with half to two-thirds of its passengers like us hungering, thirsting for their country, America! Did not America thrill to our coming? Could so much eager love go unnoticed? And then one night we had anchored within sight of our country's lights and waited the sun of morning to enter her gates. Do any of us returning ever forget those first days? Each now stood in my memory as clear as if it has been but yesterday.

San Francisco as it looked three years before kept rising up before me. I could see her well-dressed crowds, I could all but feel her pavements under my feet, catch the rush of her life, see the white faces, not a handful, but always more and more and more. I remembered we could not sit down inside a room. We had to go and look upon that pageant of white faces, the procession of motor-cars, the sun shining on their tops, the glitter of luxury within them, gaze at the park as it lay there between the St. Francis and the shops on its other side.

I remembered again the majesty of my nation, the majesty of machines doing men's bidding which I seemed only fully to realize three years ago when I

had gone back to it from this country where men worked like animals and grew to be like them. That spirit of control by machinery which actuated my country had held me in awe. I remembered how, as we sat in the observation car speeding across our great country, I had watched the smoke of the engine and the flame of the autumn fade away together at the end of a tunnel and had felt that thrill of man triumphant over nature. Then it was I had suddenly realized that that triumphant man was my fellow countryman! Even now as I thought of these, even though I was still in this country of China where men acquiesce to floods and famine and pestilence, where daily I was breathing the air of fatalism, I felt suddenly snatched up to be among men of my own country who made the earth do their bidding.

Every mile we had covered I remembered faith had grown within me. Even as we flew across those most arid portions of Nevada and across the alkaline soil of Utah, mile upon mile of dust and waste where nature refused to be subjected, I still believed in the ultimate triumph of my countrymen. They would find a way to subjugate even this wild untamed desert and make her bloom. My country was youth, youth undaunted, unafraid, building herself into the gigantic force of machinery. There was no other such country! So spoke my heart, the heart of a returning native.

Now three years later in this last spring of this last cycle of homesteading, as I went about my island

house those impressions swept back over me. I remembered anew how I had marvelled not only at the power but at the bigness of my own country, how I had noticed that it held bits of every other country, and so much that was uniquely its own. In the Sierras I had seen bits of Korea, in Nevada and Utah I had seen Manchuria and Siberia. We had sped on. And I had made a vow never again to be meek before men and women from other countries as I had often been in the past. I, a returned native, had sat in the observation car, worshipping my own country under its autumn colors.

For the three previous years I had been living, as now, in a half tropic country, that green half of China. And then I had come upon the shining reds and yellows, the burst of color of an American autumn and out of such beauty rose something which set my heart to quicker beating—the grain elevator. Tall, aspiring, without hint of decoration, they had set my pulses hammering. They were like us, they were our architecture, born out of business genius. I had seen the creation of other countries mostly born out of religious need. I thought of the Altar of Heaven, beautiful beyond words, but decaying. Here in my country was perhaps the first hint of a new creation in the world, these grain elevators that were but a whispering prophecy of the skyscrapers. These were a new creative form and they were born not out of religion but out of industry and they were beautiful

and they too aspired to the sky as did cathedrals and they were the work of my own country. Yes, we were the nation that glorified industry and loved machinery and machinery also had aspiration in it. Hitch your automobile to the sun was the slogan of America I kept hearing.

I remembered again the afternoon when we came to the middle west. It was at sundown that I perceived we had left the great west behind and were in the middle west. The stretches of corn stubble gave me some poignant nostalgia, the nostalgia of childhood. I loved them with the love of the returned native. I could see again long dusty roads that stretched away without rise of ground across the Illinois prairies when we went riding in the old surrey in my childhood. My spirit seemed to grow and expand and take on freedom in the sight of these unhampered fields. I was a Rip Van Rinkle returning after long years to the scenes of my childhood. What had I been doing with terraced rice fields? These great abiding stretches were the land of my nativity. How had I ever left this land of newness and aspiration for a land bound under millions of years of traditions? How had I ever dared to ask to understand that other land when I began this book? Why, my eleven years in China fell away from me like a forgotten chrysalis even as I thought of my own country that last spring by the City of the Long Sand.

After tiny rice paddies I was soon to see fields

stretching away to the horizon, after low-thatched huts which held both man and beast I should look upon neat farmhouses and great red barns, after a crooked stick for a plough I should soon see huge, mysterious machines doing a hundred men's work, after narrow flagged paths there would be long gray roads stretching away into infinity, after men struggling miles on foot or carried on the shoulders of other men on foot I should see automobiles which would fly down the gray ribbons of road and out of my sight!

I remembered again that first sunset of the middle west. It came, piled up color in the west, a sunset filled full of haunting memories of my childhood. Higher and higher the masses of color banked themselves in that far-off horizon like lovely rose-red prophecies of magic to come for men who had already learned to race with incredible speed over the earth's surface and to fly up there in air close to the rose-red prophecy. Our's was the era and the country of the romance of science! Over and over I looked at the barns, the symbols of this middle west that fed even women and children in China. I saw by their sides towers sometimes one, sometimes two. "Just silos" said someone in the observation car, but that person was not a returned native. Towers they were, turning the barns into red castles. There they stood, those towered castles, amidst the flame of autumn colors with more castles banked behind them in the sky. And then when at last darkness came there were still

the shining steel rails glistening beneath us. Thus did the big man of machinery, my countryman, hold me enthralled.

And then came New York, that other wonderful city, and there in lower New York was our skyscraper which three years before had shot us out like the sparks of a skyrocket. There it was with its shadow falling on the lower buildings across the street and the street, a western street, curving away out of our sight and again automobiles with the sun shining on their tops, and, and—yes, it would all be waiting for us.

Those were the castles that rose up under my hand in the garden, and filled the rooms of my big house that last spring. Can you understand how they thrilled me, who for eleven years had spent but two short "home leaves" in America? Can you understand, you who see these things every day?



CHAPTER XXX

DISASTER

WHY had I deluded myself into building castles, the castles of a returning native, I who by my marriage had given myself to homesteading in the name of my country's trade? Let my pioneer spirit awake to reality. Never should one choose peace or bright dreams of home on a frontier whether it be of land or trade. Why did the spring with its flowers, its clouds over Yolosan, lure me into forgetfulness? Well, my dreams ended abruptly.

Weeks before in the winter around the fire in my lookout room had not the men prophesied that all this unrest, all this anti-foreign propaganda needed but some one incident to make it break into flames against every white man in China, whether his country were guilty of offense or not? This prophecy was fulfilled on the fateful day of May thirtieth. That day which for all the years of my childhood and youth I had associated with the patriots who had fallen in American wars from now on would always bring to

me our horror over the outbreak in the foreign settlement in Shanghai. That was the spark which touched off the fire of anti-foreign feeling. That hatred which we had all dreaded was fanned into life on that fateful thirtieth of May in the shooting of the student rioters in Shanghai, by the police.

The news reached Changsha by wire and fell upon the Chinese city like a bomb. Students and Chinese teachers in mission as well as government schools, passed the news to the men on the street that the foreigners had killed many Chinese students. They saw no extenuating circumstances. There was no doubt in their minds that the shooting had been done without provocation. The papers, the handbills, the orating students did not mention that the crowds had wrecked fifty thousand dollars' worth of property in a Japanese mill a few days before, that at the time when the police shot these same peaceful men had got one of the city's policemen down on the ground and were making a rush on the police station itself. How far apart we had grown! Neither side could see the point of view of the other.

Hatred and anger against the white man rose to an appalling height in the city of Changsha as we knew it did in every city in China. Here we were in defenseless handfuls scattered over China surrounded by this growing hate. Already, in some cities, white men had been killed, houses wrecked. We who were on waterways had the protection of the British,

Japanese, and American navies, but one thought with horror of what might happen to those missionaries and business people who in tiny groups of two or five or ten were isolated in some far interior point.

So at the close of this three-year cycle of homesteading, on this island surrounded now by the high waters of this Yangtse tributary, I stood at my lookout window as on so many previous days, and watched my husband's departure for his office across in that city which wanted only one thing, that we personally should pay for what they had been told was our massacre of their young men. I thought a little wistfully of my sisters in America who perform the same rite of seeing their husbands off as I watched my husband take the short ride in the sampan to the launch, saw it turn and move down river towards the mainland and that city where we were, even on the lips of the children, a byword and an anathema. He went with scarcely a glance backwards, his mind full of many anxieties.

He had two of his men up-country. He had a family of three living down at the "Installation." He had behind its walls the most inflammable of commodities; he had also behind those walls an army of Chinese workmen fed on the reports of massacred Chinese; he had guarding those lives and that property a few Chinese themselves fed on the same propaganda. And no man down there carried a gun or as much as a policeman's billy. In the harbor sat a Japanese

gunboat and a British one. But what were they amongst so many? Mission centres were scattered all over the city and like us in case of violence would need defense. The members of them, not less than the members of the business community, wished to stand by their responsibilities. The leaving of property is always done only as a last resort in these dangerous times in China. To leave always appears to ask for destruction.

June first came, the day scheduled for a great parade in honor of the "massacred students" of Shanghai. As on other mornings, my husband quickly took sampan and boarded the launch and was quickly lost to my sight amidst the junks. An hour later our company bride, who lived over the office and whose husband was one of the men up-country, came in with a chit from my husband. I opened it and read, all the time trying to carry on with the little bride a normal conversation. We hoped to spare her some of our anxiety. We did not think that up to this time she had realized fully the gravity of her position or of her husband's, up-country.

"We fear trouble" I read, to myself.

"Why did your husband send me over? I don't mind parades," asked the little bride.

"Oh, he just thought there would be so much noise and confusion." I answered, silently reading: "There are all sorts of rumors. They threaten to throw bombs, attack the office and consulate. I may not



Of such were the armies made up.

be able to get home for 'tiffin.' Don't worry if I don't."

I stood looking at the chit, thinking how strange it seemed to couch such great and grave danger in terms of everyday activity.

Then I recollected myself and said to the little bride "I'm glad you've come. I said to my husband at breakfast I wanted you to see the garden. The snapdragons are all out."

I looked at our little bride who sat there exerting the community's spirit of taking things lightly. But a bare six months ago she had feared to walk alone the short distance from her apartment over the office to the despatch launch; she had had to have a watchman from the office take her the few steps to call on her neighbor at the American consulate! There was stuff of pioneers in us yet.

Very calmly she went with me out on the terrace where I had stood two years before to watch that demonstration of the Chinese against the Japanese. All we could see now were great masses of white-clad Chinese moving along the bund with floating red banners. I knew what those banners said. I had seen them in a previous parade. "Kill the white man," "Down with imperialism," "Down with Christianity," "China for the Chinese." Strange and terrible sensation to stand there in the quiet of my garden with its peaceful growing things and to look up at my beloved house where the servants at this very moment were

going about their regular duties and yet know that all that volume of noise rising from the crowds over in the city was hate against us. Can you imagine how it would feel to yourself to be surrounded and hated by millions of people? Terrible to think that those people with whom we had worked for so many years, whose country we too loved, hated us.

Just so fragile is the good will between the white and yellow races. From the time that the first foreigners had set foot in China bent on trade and the bringing of religion, the man in the street had easily believed the most preposterous stories about us, even to such tales as that we kidnapped and ate their children. It took nothing to start these stories, a basin full of boiling clothes bubbling up before the eyes of some ignorant frightened Chinese. But I had never felt this hate, only the incurable un-understanding of East and West.

But now as I watched the parade of the city's students and the city's riffraff I shuddered at the formidable combination of students teaching the dangerous doctrines of race hatred to those animal-like coolies who in their ignorance and superstition would believe anything of us. I thought sadly of the long line of people from both East and West who had given their best to establish this international trade, a trade that was a benefit to the Chinese as well as to ourselves. I saw the clipper ship captains and those rough old pioneers of our own company. I saw my

husband working to establish stations in bleak, cold Manchuria. I saw myself struggling over the sugar godown and the "Cave." I saw the work of this long line of frontiersmen going down under mob hatred. It is hard to see the thing one has given one's best years to destroyed before one's eyes. There was a stalemate between us and the Chinese. They insisted we surrender the treaty privileges given by their fathers; we insisted that they first rid their prisons of filth, their courts of trial by torture, and establish trustworthy courts and government.

When my husband came home at tea-time he took me aside and told me things were very serious indeed, that Mr. Chen, that number-one Chinese of ours, faithful and loyal, had begged him to close the office. He feared the worst. He had seen the anti-foreign riots here in 1910 and the hatred then, he said, was nothing to this. My husband had compromised by sending the little bride over to me. But, as on other days, nothing had happened. Chao Heng-ti, that governor about whose attitude toward us we had been so uncertain two years ago, was showing great strength and presence of mind. The city had been well guarded all day. Everything was quiet, so far, up-country, but my husband said he had wired for the men to get in as quickly as possible.

And that was that. There was nothing to do but to go to the club and live up to the code of white men in the East—put on the brave front of taking things

lightly. And truly, with all our apprehension and feeling of horrible suspense there were moments when our danger seemed a fabrication of our brains. That same night, for instance, when we awoke to hear the Chinese flute quavering into life from some courtyard in the Chinese village farther down on the island, we felt it was the same sleeping Chinese countryside that in ten years we had come to know and love so well. And then there was the servants' wing where slept members of that other race. They who served me very patiently, albeit making full use of their powers to "squeeze," they who came to me like children when they were sick, they who at all times were anxious to uphold the face of the household, surely they, too, had not come to hate me as had my neighbors over in the city and in the island village?

Saturday night nearly everyone on the island was at one of the three dinner parties given. No immediate danger threatened us and even if it had we should probably have been doing the same thing. It was our code and furthermore you must remember that our houses harbored each a dozen or more of that race who were watching us. To change our way of life would have been in their eyes to show fear which is the biggest advantage we could concede to an Oriental. In the main we felt our servants wanted to be loyal, but how far their loyalty could continue in face of the threatenings of their families by the students we did not know. The chances were they would have to go

on strike, but in the meantime we made merry and were served with all the punctiliousness of Chinese servants.

Dinner was over and we sat at cards when the first hint of danger came in. "Where is the wife of your man living over the office? She should not stay on the bund tonight," read the chit. That caused us no consternation as she was staying with us. Then came a note with more ominous content. I think now I shall always see vividly that party in their evening clothes sitting around the table and my husband slowly opening that chit. "There is wild talk," it said, "all over the city that the railway engineer (that was a Britisher who was at dinner we knew over on the bund) has killed a Chinese. A great mob of students and hoodlums are on their way to his house." It stood between the city and our "Installation."

I can see that note going from man to man at the card tables as they made light of its contents to the rest of us—their wives. "Nothing very much," they said. "A little trouble down on the railway." The wife of our installation man looked anxiously from one to the other, then at her husband. "Mac———Doris———only the amah———" It was her little girl asleep at the Installation she was talking about. The American consul, my husband, and the father went out to the nearest telephone.

The rest of us made our broken bridge groups into a poker game. "Jack pot" said some one. The

woman with a baby down near where the mob was supposed to be gathering opened and won on an unseen hand. "Show your openers." She threw down a Jack and a King. A shout of protest went up. "You can't do that you know," said an elderly Britisher and patted her hand. She was playing bravely, if wildly. That was the only show of emotion by any of us—not an outcry. It flashed through my mind that perhaps our grandmothers who went through many an Indian raid would not have been ashamed of us that night.

The men after what seemed an eternity came back with vague carefully worded information which only increased our apprehension. The other dinner party, they said, was not so calm. There was a telephone in that house and all sorts of rumors kept coming in as men and women over in the city tried through that telephone to get in touch with their consuls. Yale-in-China was on the road of the mob which, it was rumored, was enroute to the engineer's house. Yale was unprotected by a wall. The excitement ran high within and without, down there. Men passing were reported by amahs and servants and students to be shouting the taunt, "This place won't be here in the morning." Those very Chinese students and teachers who had been helping in the spread of the doctrine of race-hatred of the last months looked at each other frightened and aghast. This thing had far outrun them, had got into the hands of hoodlums and the rowdy

element of the city. They had worked hard with the foreigners to build up this institution. They were frightened at the voices outside, voices whose hate some of them had helped to rouse. All this had come over the telephone to the other dinner party.

With elaborately concealed haste our dinner party now broke up. We walked close to our garden walls, a tiny path now above the water, watching our people start off for the "Installation" and those others for the bund. What that mob might do before morning no one knew, still there was nothing we could do but wait. To take any steps for protection would only arouse greater hatred. Our only comfort was that word had been got through to Chao Heng-ti, the Governor.

And as we stood on our upstairs veranda there was the flute quavering forth its plaintive theme and the Chinese countryside sleeping peacefully under the night sky. This quiet and peace under which lay so much uncertainty and hatred made me shiver with its sinister portent. It took more nerve to meet it than the popping of guns of our civil war—for to take any measure for self-protection would be interpreted as it had been in Shanghai; namely, that you were only waiting a chance to injure the Chinese. So, as in other crises, the company house took us to itself and we slept fitfully with the picture of those animal-like men, the ricksha coolies, the human water system, out to loot and kill the white man.

The next morning before we were dressed the boy announced that Mr. Chen wanted to see my husband. When we came down we found him sitting on the edge of a big chair, immaculately dressed, and with his manners of a courtier only just a little hurried by the exigencies of the morning. The boy, tense and nervous, had brought him tea but it was untasted. He had come to tell us of conditions, albeit the Chinese had called after him that he was a traitor to his country and a friend of the foreign devils. But as he said simply, "Why should I desert you now? For two-thirds of my life I have worked for this foreign company and benefited by its business." Indeed, why should he take part in hatred of us except that his own safety demanded it.

He had sat up most of the night, he said, waiting to see what was going to happen. The talk, he said, was worse than in the 1910 riots. As for last night, nothing had happened. Chao had got wind of the thing in time. He had stationed soldiers at Yale; the foreign faculty, too, had stood on guard all night. A mob had indeed gone down to the engineer's house but the troops had been there ahead of them and they went peacefully away. When the engineer reached home, for he insisted on going at the end of the evening, leaving his wife at the British consulate, everything was quiet. Was it brave, or just foolhardy for him to go? No one would ever be able to say in which class most of our acts of those days fell. At

any rate, although his friends had pled with him to stay up town he had insisted he could not desert the Chinese who had worked with him for many years. He and Mr. Chen, you see, acted under the same code—one a Britisher and one a Chinese. Each preferred loyalty to safety.

Mr. Chen told us Chao had put the city under the strictest of martial law. Every few feet all over the city stood soldiers with fixed bayonets, and the commander of each small group of soldiers was given the power of life and death. These red paddles which we had not seen since the days of our civil war were again in their hands and Chao Heng-ti had posted an edict saying that to lay hands on white man or white man's property was to be beheaded immediately without trial. There is nothing which inspires such terror in the hearts of the Chinese as this power of the soldiers over life and death. And now Chao Heng-ti, about whom we had not cared much whether or not he held his governorship two years ago, was exerting this power in our behalf. As long as the Governor could hold his soldiers, we were safe. But that was the point of alarm. How long could he hold them against the propaganda of the students? His was a very precarious throne. As two years ago the Komintang, the radical party of China—the Reds—continually threatened him. This time his interests and our needs coincided. In defending us he also defended himself and the province against

them. I went out now, a little relieved, leaving my husband and Mr. Chen to talk. I even smiled a little when I surprised the boy listening at a crack of the door. Perhaps it was just as well for the servants to learn thus accidentally how things stood in the city.

It was as we sat at breakfast that the boy as he passed my husband the eggs whispered, "More better catch plenty food. Maybe Chinese not sell to you tomorrow." It was as he passed the bacon I said to my plate, "Do you think the servants will leave?" On his next round he murmured, "I stay. Yesterday have send letter my father no b'long missie house any more. Now can stay. No savee cook, coolie."

After breakfast, when the servants were out of the house eating their morning meal, I called the boy into my own room. I knew he would wish to be rewarded for his faithfulness by my giving him a chance to advise me on the question of supplies. "Boy," I said, "what do we need to eat in case your people will not sell to us after today?" He grew very grave. I waited, pencil in hand. Finally some show of solving the problem lighted his poker-like face. "Jam," he said in triumph. Thus did my list begin—a list of food which was to do in case of boycott or siege.

It was now that our own plans of defense were secretly made. We had three gunboats, two Japanese and one British, standing by in the river. They were not large in case we should have to evacuate but adequate for the first defenses. In case Chao's sol-

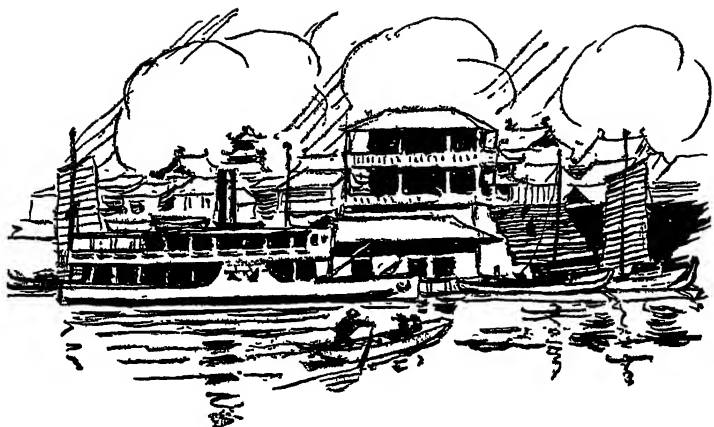
diers got out of hand the people from the city would be brought to the island. (Heaven help that they learned of the necessity in time.) And my house would be the fort for the Americans and the British consulate for the British, even as I had been shown on that day of our arrival three years and a half before. The smaller gunboat—unless the water fell—would go around to the back of the island. Two would guard us from the front.

I thought of how many then we should have to feed in such an emergency and of that meagre list of supplies I had made under the boy's tutelage. I did not dare increase it for fear of rousing the suspicion of the other servants. I must not appear to be fearing anything.

And then again our attention was called to the river. Never in happiness or trouble or danger could we forget it. Our lives at all times hung upon it. And now this river which a year before had been at flood was daily shrinking before our eyes. Here in the middle of the summer when it should have been at its highest, we watched its waters go. Our own gunboat, the *Villalobos*, released from Hankow now that a destroyer had been sent to her relief, was to come up to Changsha. How we watched for her. She would come today, we would say,—no, tomorrow. If she would only make haste. The water was indeed going. Yes, it had reached the point where she could not enter the harbor. How we

wished that Congress had not waited until last year to vote Yangtse boats. Unbuilt boats would not help us now. With a kind of "Sister-Ann" complex we watched for a little cloud, for a little rain, for a little rise in the river, and the first glimpse of the Villalobos.

And a little rain was vouchsafed us. One night the Villalobos quietly dropped anchor in the harbor. In the morning there she sat in her accustomed corner, the deepest spot to accommodate her deep draft. And then drought really came upon us. It was dryer than we had ever seen it in Hunan at this time of year. The river fell lower and lower. Perilously near it came to the mark where even the up-river steamers would have to give up their Hankow-Changsha run. After that we should be cut off, shut away to ourselves. And still reports came in from this city and that of foreign lives threatened, of some of our numbers killed, of property looted. And thus did we in the name of international trade await the future, while the time of our own stay in Changsha shortened to three weeks, and still Chao's soldiers held the city quiet.



CHAPTER XXXI

FAMINE

THE river each morning now when I look from my window is a little lower. As in Changsha's closed season, far below me at the foot of my garden embankment, stretches the Long Sand, but no longer is it held in sculptured waves, no longer do the paths like whip-thongs lie across it. These stretches of sand are unfamiliar desert sands, soft, shifting sands which the strong parching wind blows hither and thither, shifting sand which my husband on his return from the office plows though leaving no path behind him. Under the brilliant, metallic sky over those glimmering sands he moves, a pale speck in his summer "whites." The brazen sun pours down heat upon him and upon my big house and upon all Hunan.

Beyond lies the thin ribbon of a river with no trade of the world floating on its bosom. Gone are the junks carrying calicoes from British mills and boxes of cigarettes from Virginia, bales of cotton from Georgia and copper from Utah mines. Gone are the junks coming down river loaded with rice, with linen, with zinc, with lead, with antimony. Gone are the big steamers bringing to Hunan the things which it cannot produce, taking away its surplus products. Gone is the trade of the world, the life of prosperity which used to go by on the river at my gates, below my window. No longer do America, Europe receive, China give; America, Europe give, China receive. The trade of the world has gone. Even if the river had stood hard upon my gates it would not have been there. This race-hatred has swept it away. The shipping all up and down the Yangtse is gone, swept away by strikes and boycotts.

What would the farmers now do with the crops they had raised? What would the miners do with the ore they had mined? What would become of the wool, the skeins upon skeins of silk thread so patiently made throughout China by the farmer folk? What would they do with their wood-oil if this spirit of hate and fear spread?

I sit now in my island house writing of the final experiences of Hunan that I was to witness. It was the hard, bitter experiences of a people who over-produced themselves, whose life easily slips over the

boundary from the half-fed, under-nourished into the region of the starving. No rain fell after that rain that brought the river high enough for the Villalobos to enter the harbor. The rice crop which had been threatened last year by flood was now threatened by drought. These weeks were the crucial ones in rice production. The squares of young rice plants which should be soggy with water were dry and parched. As in the previous year all surplus of rice had been shipped away by the avaricious military. So now, added to the turmoil of race-hatred and the upset conditions of trade due to it, the common people in those overstocked tunneled streets of the cities and towns, the occupants of the little farm huts nestling under the groves of bamboo see the grim spectre of famine standing in their doorways.

As I write, I feel the despair of the people once more creeping over the sands, over my compound walls. I feel it more than I felt their suffering during the flood a year ago. Perhaps it is because there are some memories of race within me paralleling this despair of China. As I look up into the clear sky or at white sterile clouds many a story of prairie drought told me by old settlers of the middle west comes back to me. The grass in my garden is parched and crackles under my feet like the grass of our own prairies after it has been blown upon by a dry scorching wind. Perhaps because I am a daughter of the middle west I feel more keenly the despair of the

people over their dried-up rice paddies. Or it may be that my spirit has been made more sensitive, abiding as it does now in the atmosphere of danger.

Vainly the people strive to appease the wrath of the gods. The governor, as in the time of flood, issues an edict that nothing shall be killed. The order is more stringent than last year, for famine is nearer us this year even than last. Not only may we not buy beef and chicken but no fish may be taken from the river and no eggs may be sold in the market. Nothing that holds within it a spark of life may be touched for food. The people are now ground between the upper and nether millstones of paralyzed trade and this sacrifice to the gods. What with the rice they cannot get from outside and the things they may not eat because of their superstitious fears they eke out miserable meals. The servants come to me. With their childlike need of sympathy they always come in trouble. They tell me that for days they have had nothing but vegetables to eat. So I shut my eyes to the greater "squeeze" going on in my kitchen, to the disappearance of butter since they now have no fats in their foods; to the disappearance of flour to take the place of their rice. One day their rice doubles in price because of profiteering among the shopkeepers. Rice riots start in the city, but our strong governor puts a stop to this by promising to execute anyone caught hoarding rice.

Besides these perplexities there were our own, for



*THEY come to their gods asking a little
mercy, a little rain.*

we too were caught between those millstones. We too could buy no chickens and no eggs except when we sent the cooks to the country under cover of darkness. Strangely enough the Chinese enjoy circumventing their gods a little like this. Our cook did not mind inducing a hard-pressed farmer to sell to us. Now that no ships came up the Yangtse from Shanghai my store of tinned things was running low, and the little foreign shop in the city which sold "fresh vegetables and best season fruit" was finding its cupboards bare. Added to all these difficulties there were flare-ups of the city's hate, days when they threatened to allow no one to sell anything to the white men.

And still the sun shines out of the heavens over those burning sands, over the little, parched, rice paddies where the people work heroically to save their crops. From the valleys yonder by Yolosan I can hear the strange whining sound of the foot-wheels which the men and women tread all day and all night pumping the river water into their fields. They that are near the river have this hope of salvation, but what about the paddies behind Yolosan and back through the province? There is no such salvation for them. In the night I waken often now, roused by that wailing sound of the wheels trod by the feet of despairing men. Awakening suddenly like that in the night that wail is as the wail of starving people, people who for three years have been my neighbors.

What more can they do? they think in despair.

From the country now each day come the farmers, leaving their parched fields to go and pray in the temples, to offer incense to those unresponsive gods, to ask them again and again what it is they want. Is it penance? They will offer it. So they come very slowly to the temple stopping every few feet to kneel in the street and knock their heads until they bleed against the stones. No? That is not enough? Is it suffering? Well, they will give that too if only the gods will send them rain to save their fields. So they walk through the dark streets with iron hooks to which they hang incense stuck through their flesh. Thus bleeding and pathetic they come before their gods asking a little mercy, a little rain, a little rice that their sons may live.

And among them move the preachers of race-hatred. Maybe if all other things fail they had better try taking this advice to rid themselves of the foreigner within their gates. Meanwhile they will try what their fathers have taught them. These farmer folk are peace-loving people. They will try taking their gods out to look at the sky so that they may see how very bare it is of rain. Perhaps that will move the gods to pity. So at night now round and round the island move the gods in their chairs, borne on the shoulders of men and companioned by the bang of the tom-toms. That little hobble-de-hoy flute which companioned them that time when all the island seemed to be set to love and youth is silent now.

We have fallen upon such troublous times since then. Maybe they think it no time for hobble-de-hoy flutes.

Today all the servants have gone about with anxious faces looking at that shining sky above them. If it does not rain today, by their superstitions it will not rain for a very long time. It is the beginning of the great heat. Noon draws on and the tension grows greater as the sky shows no sign of cloud. It is a hot oppressive day, a day that would test all our courage even if we were not haunted by this need for rain. It is three o'clock now. We have reached our final reserves of endurance. I wander from room to room of my great house unable to rest. Suddenly I feel wind, I see black clouds sweep up from the north. The rain, is it coming? The servants hurry about the house with smiling faces closing the windows.

"The rain will come," they say as they pass me.

"The rain will come," they say to each other.

"The gods have heard."

There it comes pouring down, the blessed rain. I stand by the window and sniff the odor of it falling on the parched garden, and with joy I listen to its drip in the rain pipes. Alas! Ten minutes, it is all gone. But the people are happy. It has rained. That is enough. Moreover their soothsayers told them it would come like this "first a little, then plenty." And had it not come? How easily satisfied were these people trained by want to accept with gratitude

small gifts. Whether rain had fallen away in the province was an unanswered question. Whether the rice crop could still be saved was another. How much could they harvest from their weakened plants? They could not say. But never mind, their gods had answered them. The rain had come!

Three days have passed. Two little showers! Loaves and fishes. What are they among so many? The gods of Hunan refuse to perform a miracle and increase that mere handful of raindrops to plenty. The sky is again brazen, the garden lies parched. The wail of the foot-wheels pumping water over by Yolosan again fills the rooms of my house and will not let me rest. Famine speaks through that wail Poor, tortured China; poor, broken, military ridden China; bandit afflicted China.



CHAPTER XXXII

I BEQUEATH THE COMPANY HOUSE TO ANOTHER

THROUGH all these days of danger, of threatened famine, of the wail of the foot-wheels over by Yolosan, there has been another clutch at my heart, something tearing and rasping at work within me. I have been destroying this so carefully built up latest home of mine. All our household gods I have taken away. The company furniture once more transcends the great rooms. My time is up. As company wife I am about to bequeath my woman's mantle, my home, to another. The new master and mistress are due tomorrow.

As I walk through my vast half-empty rooms taking farewell I now perceive that we, like the others, have left here something of ourselves. We, too, have lived in the lookout chamber, passed our hands over the smooth rail of the long dark stairway that ascends through the heart of the house, and sat before the fires on its hearths, have built day after day ourselves into the fibre of this company house.

I wonder about the new mistress. Will she cherish this woman's mantle made out of the dreams of feudal grandeur, out of the experiences of life and death, of

joy and sorrow, of noisy gaiety of the bachelors, to which we have now added our three years' deep companionship in each other? Will she stop to listen to the laughter of the children and the whisper of the lovers who have been here before her? Will she cherish the memories of that other company wife who within these walls had meted out to her the tragedy of death? Will she delight in the strength of our well-tried love for each other which dwells within these rooms?

And so I go for one last walk in my garden. Would the new mistress care for it? Like the rice paddies it lay all parched and dead just now partaking of the common woe of Hunan, but I loved it. Seen through my own eyes it was still beautiful because it held a dream; seen through the eyes of its new mistress I felt its pathetic shortcomings. After all it was not very like the dream. Trees and shrubs had refused to be hurried into a three-year cycle of homesteading. Floods and drought had delayed me. Suppose the new mistress decided to destroy it? It stabbed me to think of it, but I acquiesced. We, like the other company people, had had our time, and it was up. Like the feudal lord who had mourned over his screens and the two who built the sliding doors, we should soon be but ghosts of memory in the house.

And what will be the experience of the new mistress I wonder as I pace the garden paths and look up at my great house, mine until tomorrow? And what will the City of the Long Sand say to her as she gazes

from the lookout window? For with the personal memories of the house I must also bequeath all this unrest, this turmoil, this suffering of Hunan on whose soil the company house stands—alas too there is this growing hatred of the foreigner. Many experiences shrouded now in mystery will come to the company house before the long struggle for brotherhood of trade will be realized. How far would the new mistress of this house be called upon to go down into the Gethsemane of this struggle?

This evening for the last time we passed out under the portico of the house, walked the path between the pyramid evergreens and for the last time trod the Long Sand. We made our last trip across the river in the company launch, heard for the last time the crack, crack of firecrackers. All the Chinese who had worked with us thus did us honor. For the last time we stepped down on to the lower deck of the little up-river steamer where the great electric light hung over the hold. For the last time we sat in the crude little saloon upstairs and slept in the hard narrow bunks, and for the last time at dawn felt the throb of the machinery as the boat left her moorings and started down river. Half drugged with sleep and the emotions of the past weeks I looked from the porthole to catch a final glimpse of the island, dim and dusky in the half-light and the many chimneys of the company house rising above the trees. Then the island was gone and for me that life of the Long Sand.

